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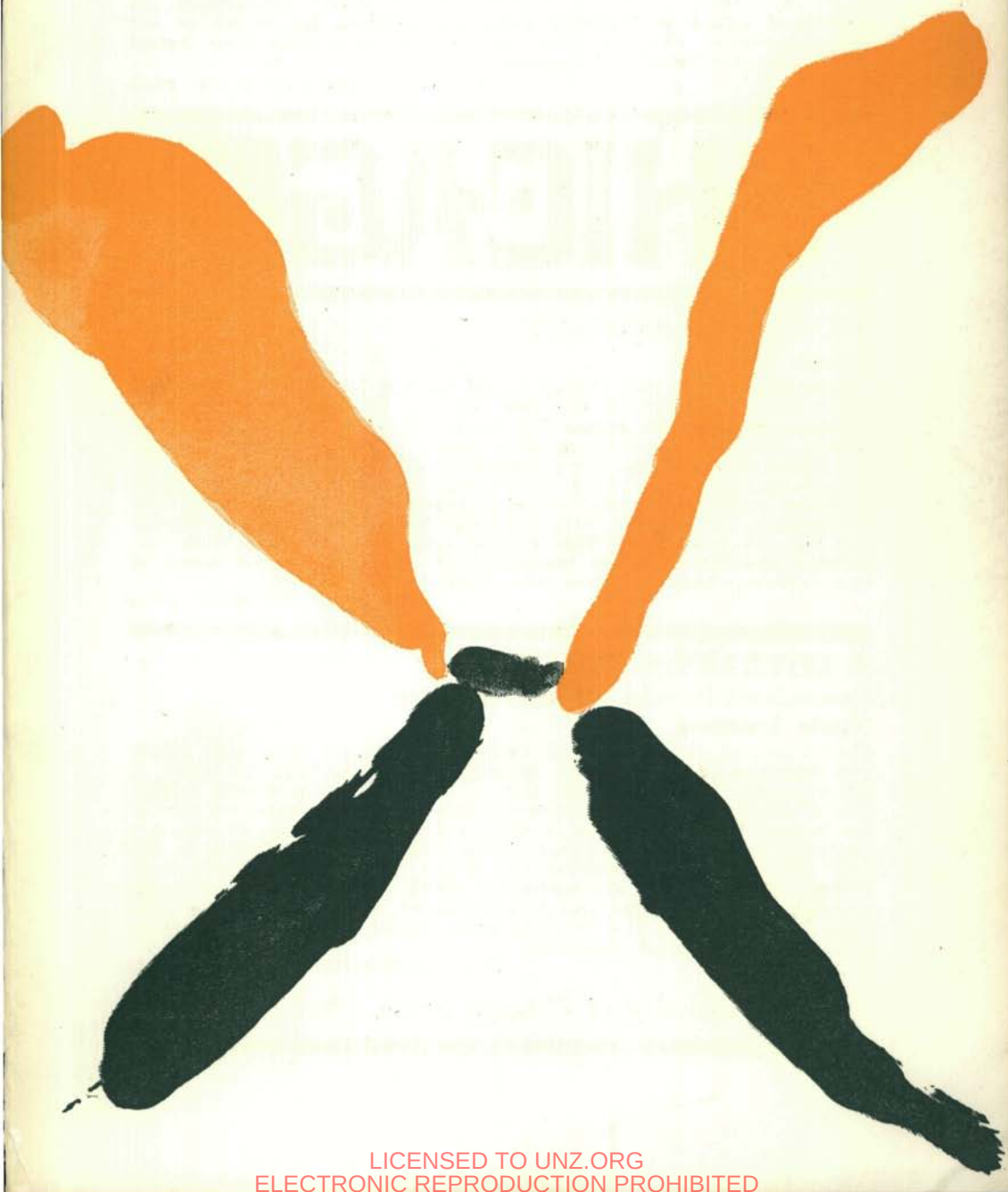

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CONTENTS

COVER
Helen Frankenthaler

ARTICLES
The Young and the Elders
Frank Kermode 184
The Balance of Power
Kate Millett 199
The Other Lawrence
Alan Friedman 239
1 + 1
Richard Gilman 274
Up From Under
Gaia Servadio 284

POEMS
Allen Ginsberg 180
Denise Levertov 219

STORIES
Drop Dead
Paul Neuburg 221
As It Is Written
Filippa Rolf 256

DRAWINGS
The Trial
Jules Feiffer 254

VARIETY
Private Lives
Paul Fussell, Jr. 288

BOOKS
Notebook 1967-68 by Robert Lowell; The Complete Poems by Randall Jarrell; Incantations: Poems 1966-68 by Robert Penn Warren; Love Poems by Anne Sexton; Speech For Instance by Sidney Goldfarb; The Contemporary American Poets: American Poetry Since 1940, ed. Mark Strand; Naked Poetry: Recent American Poetry In Open Forms, ed. Stephen Berg & Robert Mezey: G. S. Fraser 295
Rock From The Beginning by Nik Cohn; Rock and Roll Will Stand, ed. Greil Marcus; The Age of Rock, ed. Jonathan Eisen; The Story of Rock by Carl Belz; Lillian Roxon's Rock Encyclopedia: Stuart Mitchner 301
The Complete Poems by Elizabeth Bishop: David Kalstone 310
Obsolete Communism: The Left Wing Alternative by Daniel Cohn-Bendit: James Gilbert 315
Literature and Technology: The Alien Vision by Wylie Sypher: G. S. Rousseau 319

CONTEMPORARY NONSENSE 324

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NOTES

ALLEN GINSBERG is spending some time "outside cities learning music milking cows & goats." . . . FRANK KERMODE says, "Nothing interesting is happening to me." . . . Author of **Sexual Politics,** KATE MILLETT is also a sculptor, filmmaker and "troublesome faculty member." She is working on two more books, one of which is called **Yak.** . . . DENISE LEVERTOV's **Re–Learning The Alphabet** was published by New Directions this spring. . . . PAUL NEUBERG is in Eastern Europe doing research for his next book. . . . ALAN FRIEDMAN is in Sardinia, retracing D. H. Lawrence's footsteps. . . . FILIPPA ROLF is spending the summer at Yaddo. . . . JULES FEIFFER's drawings are part of **Pictures At A Prosecution** to be published by Grove Press in September. . . . RICHARD GILMAN recently published **A Confusion of Realms.** . . . GAIA SERVADIO has been traveling extensively in the Soviet Union and is publishing a book, **The Method.** . . . PAUL FUSSELL, JR. is now in London finishing a book on Samuel Johnson. . . . G. S. FRASER is writing a handbook on metrics for sixth-formers and undergraduates. . . . Doing graduate work at Rutgers, STUART MITCHNER has also published one novel and is currently finishing up a book on hitchhiking, music and India. . . . JAMES GILBERT is writing a book on American political history. . . . G. S. ROUSSEAU is working on a book about the relationship of science and literature.

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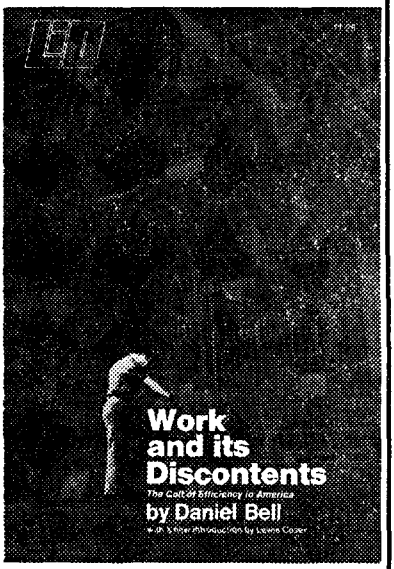

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SUMMER 70

1. We are in a new period, with new problems and new tasks. The main problem now is the aggressiveness of the Right and its mobilization of mass support. We can't pretend we're still in the sixties, when the problem was apathy.

2. We may be in a mess, but we're not in a revolutionary situation. Lenin's definition of a revolutionary situation is still correct — the mass of the people, including the working class, the intelligentsia, the army and the best part of the middle class become disaffected, at the same time that the government has lost its power and its will. Those militants on the New Left who act as though we are in a revolutionary situation are playing cops and robbers. But it is a dangerous game because the robbers are mostly imaginary while the cops are real. To play at revolution is to play into the hands of the counterrevolution.

3. It is hard to define the actual situation. The country seems to be flying apart, as though in a political centrifuge. Everything seems to be breaking down or out of hand. But the agencies of control are strong, and supported by an aggressive Americanism. And to go by the past, the country always has been remarkably stable and resilient.

4. What is most disturbing is that much of the support of the Administration comes from the know-nothings and the red-necks, in the middle and working class. Big business is almost as disaffected as the students. The future is unpredictable, particularly because the United States has no set patterns; but the dependence of the administration on this new conservative mass sets up a political logic of its own.

5. It has always seemed that any movement of the far Right in this country would take some novel, unpredictable form. But it now looks as though it would take the most obvious form: grass-roots patriotism, as Huey Long predicted. The militant Americanism of the construction workers is instructive, since they come mostly from minority groups.

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6. The New Left is not a monolith and is not identical with its nutty fringes, some of whom think they are in Algeria or Czarist Russia. Street fighting and bombing and confrontation politics now are an expression of petulance, impatience and a tendency to write off the country.

7. The peace movement is caught in a contradiction between radical and liberal aims. To call for the destruction of the military establishment, to support the Vietcong, to call for American defeat — all these are revolutionary, some Maoist, ends. They go far beyond opposition to the war in Vietnam, which is basically a liberal position.

8. The attack on liberals as more dangerous than the Right by part of the Left is both foolish and suicidal. In addition to playing into the hands of the Right it is alienating liberals and making them more conservative. Where is the Left to find its allies if the workers are written off as "reactionary" and the liberals as "tools of the system"? In the past only the power of organized labor has been able to stave off a takeover by the Right or by the Army. Why not just give up? We have already had an instructive example of this kind of wisdom on the part of those political geniuses on the Left who said Nixon is better than the liberals.

9. Conservative liberals are correct in their criticism of the youthful terrorists and those who put confrontation above all other forms of politics. But by harping only on the faults of the young, instead of also supporting the cogent aims and activities of the students and the New Left and addressing themselves to the faults of our society, they play into the hands both of the extreme Right and that part of the Left that mistakes revolutionary postures for radical activity.

10. The attacks on the "avant-guard" in the name of standards by critics claiming to be liberal or even radical are really an attempt to hold on to the past. This too plays into the hands both of those who hate everything new and those who celebrate everything new.

11. It is time for a new liberal movement — one with positive beliefs and goals, and not one shuttling between a fear of the Right and a sense of guilt toward the Left, and always covering up its past mistakes. A vacuum has been created by the Democratic party's loss of will. The new activity of the students to influence elections is a sign

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of alternative liberal politics and it seems already to be working. A new liberal movement, however genuine, will have limited aims, and hence could never satisfy those who have made a life-style out of their opposition to "liberal politics." But it could be militant, aggressive, noncompromising, and, above all, candid about itself.

12. It is time for a new radical movement — one in which tactics and a sense of political reality are not swallowed up by the self-satisfying expression of life-styles. One difficulty is that the radical movement is caught in a dilemma: to avoid being frozen into the rigid system of belief and organization of the old Marxist and communist parties, part of the New Left has swung over to a celebration of permissiveness, spontaneity and self-indulgence in which anything goes.

13. Most radical criticism of liberals is a tautology, as is most liberal criticism of radicals — whose only meaning is to obliterate what they have in common. Most liberals do not go beyond reform of the existing system. But despite the fashionable disdain for liberals today, the ideals of liberalism still represent a force for social change as well as for the preservation of liberal values.

14. The main problem in the United States has been the lack of political consciousness. In normal, more or less affluent periods, this was not disastrous, because the contradictions of the country were covered up by compromises and the playing down of differences. Recent administrations, particularly the Democratic ones, have created a feeling of unity, partly mythical, partly real. But the present administration stresses the contradictions, which by itself might be weathered, but together with the economic crisis, the frustrations of Vietnam, and the mobilization of an ugly backlash — all these coming together make one anxious about the forces that could be stirred in the country if things got worse and about the ability of liberals and radicals to cope with them.

15. What is to be done? Unless an effort is made to substitute power for postures by educating the unions, organizing professional groups, bringing the blacks into American society — the young, the students, the intellectuals, will be hopelessly isolated.

W.P.

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hogs in sunlight, dead rabbits on asphalt
Booneville passed, Crane quiet,
highway empty — silence as
house doors open, food on table,
nobody home —
sign thru windshield
100 Miles More to the Missouri.
How toy-like Pall Mall's red embossed pack
cellophane gleaming in sunshine,
Indian-head stamped crown crested,
shewing its dry leaf of history to my eye
now that I no longer reach my hand to the ashtray
nor since Xmas have lit a smoke.
One puff I remember the 18 year joy-musk of manhood
that curled thru my nostrils first time I kissed
another human body —
that time with Joe Army, he seduced me
into smoking —
I'll give Swami a present like Santa Claus —
no attachment —

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No meat nor tabaccy — even sex questionable
Now in America craving its billions
of needles of War.
Detach yrself from Matter, & look about
at the bright snowy show of Iowa,
Earth & heaven mirroring
eachother's light,
tiny meat-trucks rolling downhill
toward deep Omaha.
This is History, to quit smoking Anger-leaf
into one man's lungs,
glancing up at gravestone rows
in hill woods thru rear window.

This is History: Iowa's Finest Comics:
Sunday, Rex Morgan M.D. in snowstorm,
Mustachio'd villain cruel eyed
with long European hair
doubletalking the Doc
"Meanwhile, under the influence of LSD
Veronica races through the fields
in an acute panic"—
Author Dal Curtis
In a violet box her big tits fall on snowy ground.
Grey ice floating down Missouri, sunset into Omaha
Bishop's Buffets, German Chocolate, wall to wall carpet
Om A Hah, Om A Hum
"The land summoned them and they loved it" cut in granite
Post Office lintel, Walt Disney
playing at State week after his death.
Table service, fireplace, armchairs,
homeostasis in Omaha.

Steve Canyon Comics in Color:
U.S. Military Seabees chopper
operation dropping bridges
over the "Lake of the Black Wind"
Princess Snowflower will

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"speak over the bullhorn to the
herdsmen —
So they won't think it's a Chincom trick."
Ten-year-olds in Sunday
morning sunlight on the rug
dreaming of slack-cheekboned blond
big cocked Steve Canyon
fucking the yellow bellies
tied face down naked on the floor of the lone helicopter —
And on Sunday Evening the Reverend Preacher
C.O. Staggerflup —
America's Hope
POB 72 Hopkins Minnesota
Isiah denouncing the root of Evil to the Nation
14 billion 200 million a year to the Debt Money System,
Rolling back darkness in Nebraska —
Shanghai water power cut off by Mao's enemies
I am a Rock, I am an Island radio souls cry
passing north of Lincoln's tiny bright downtown horizon,
Square banks huddled under Capitol turret blinking red,
electric tower steam-drifts
ribboned across building tops
under city's ruby night-glow —
Let the Vietcong win over the American Army!
Dice of Prophecy cast on the giant plains!
Drum march on airwaves, anger march in the mouth,
Xylophones & trumpets screaming thru American brain —
Our violence unabated after a year
in mid-America returned, I prophesy against
this my own Nation
enraptured in hypnotic war.
And if it were my wish, we'd lose & our will
be broken
& our armies scattered as we've scattered the airy guerrillas
of our own yellow imagination.
Mothers weep & Sons be dumb
your brothers & children murder
the beautiful yellow bodies of Indochina

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in dreams invented for your eyes by TV
all yr talk gibberish mouthed by radio,
yr politics mapped by paper Star
Thought Consciousness.
Form Feeling Sensation Imagination the
5 skandas, realms of Buddha
Invaded by electronic media KLYL
News Bureau
& yr trapped in red winking Kansas
one giant delicate electrical antenna upraised
in midwestern Nebraska plains blackness
January 1967
I hope we lose this war.
Lincoln airforce Base, Ruby, Gochner
US 80 near Big Blue River,
The radio Bible'd Hour, Dallas Texas
a great nose pushed out of the dashboard
demanding Your Faith Pledge!
Money your dollars support
The Radio Bible Hour.
You pledge to God to send
100 or 10 or 2 or $1 a month to the
Radio Bible Hour —
The electric network selling itself:
"The medium is the message"
Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!
Straight thru Nebraska at Midnight
toward North Platte & Ogalalla
returning down black superhighways to Denver.

Allen Ginsberg

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Frank Kermode

THE YOUNG AND THE ELDERS

It has not been the best of years at Wesleyan, in the American universities generally, in America at large. But it has not been the worst, either. When I was here before I was most struck by a kind of civilized gaiety in the place, which was not in the least, I thought, inimical to intellectual enterprise. I'd been here ten weeks or so when Kennedy was killed. *Post,* not *propter hoc,* no doubt, but looking back one sees the progressive darkening of American intellectual life as having begun at that moment and continued until we find ourselves, in May, 1970, in the midst of an enormous academic strike, held to be the only way available for the demonstration of a proper concern at an appalling constitutional crisis which, apparently, appalls few outside the universities, and by many is regarded as a pure invention of the dissidents.

That is why this strange year is far from being the worst imaginable. Professors went along, over the years, with the assumption that "pure" knowledge — the kind that is associated with the humanities — is and ought to be impotent, and might therefore be freely expressed. Behind some of the irritation expressed by the powerful at manifestations of academic dissent there is the simple feeling that the professors and students are meddling in matters that are beyond their scope and have nothing to do with them. But this feeling is wrongly based, and it is an understanding of the need to find practical applications for their potency that black and white, student and faculty, have come together. They cannot, as once they might, think it enough to discuss "academically" — i.e., impotently — among themselves the untruths and injustices of public policy.

NOTE: This essay was specially written for *Liberations: Essays on the Humanities in Revolution,* edited by Ihab Hassan, to be published by Wesleyan University in 1971.

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This is not to abandon disinterestedness as an academic virtue; or I at least think it isn't. But we have something like a revolution in the universities in this shocked new understanding of responsibilities, and it is hardly to be expected that all of the supporters of the revolution will be as careful to preserve what seems to them merely an amenity of the *ancien régime*. In this, and in other ways, we are compelled to consider revolutionary programs and demands much more radical than any that would be necessitated by the terms of my first two paragraphs; and the older one is the more difficult it is to do so. Many of the demands of the "counterculture" are beyond the imaginative sympathy of most people of my age; this is not an excuse for the kind of nonsense Robert Conquest recently wrote in *The New York Times,* but it does complicate the issue, especially for such groups of largely middle-aged men who, throughout this year, have been discussing Revolution in the Humanities at the Center (off-campus) for Them. On the whole we were not gay, but we were usually patient and even disinterested at times. Also we were able to get on with our work to a degree perhaps unusual in this academic year. In what follows I indulge myself in the luxury of trying to express my own mixed feelings as the footsteps of actual revolution caught up with our recorded versions of it, much like the strenuous work performed for us by Mr. Acconci at the height of the Cambodian shock.[1]

Most men of fifty or so are more intimate with another revolution, with the peculiar timebound apocalypse (for so we now see it) of the thirties. There was almost pathetic testimony to this at a conference on The Future at Rutgers University in 1965, where the discussion, dominated by well-known writers from New York, got stuck in the thirties, as if the only true basis for prediction was in that period. I was never myself subjected to any experience comparable to the cauldron of New York left politics, but I could understand the fixation; my late teens were dominated by the Depression and the Spanish Civil War and the Moscow Trials and the Ribbentrop Pact. It is difficult, and probably useless, to go into this with the young. The Marxism of the time was cruder, the economic predictions on which we founded our certainties of disaster and renovation were

1 Mr. Acconci gave some recorded footsteps a long start, but then caught up with them, displaying considerable physical energy in the process.

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wrong, and we all made, without thinking, certain reservations about our own roles in a transformed society which now seem naïve or even dishonest. But there are, for all that, resemblances between then and now. It seemed quite certain that after the crisis there would be a wholly new state of affairs, not a modification of the old one. From where we were in the midthirties it *seemed* there was simply nowhere to go except into a new kind of world; a certainty confirmed, for some of us, by the early poetry of Auden, strong and authoritative in its diagnosis of our hopeless ills, powerful though vague in its characterization of what was rushing at us "out of the future into actual history." And this revolution would not be merely political, but a transformer of consciousness:

> *Some possible dream, long coiled in the ammonite's slumber*
> *Is uncurling, prepared to lay on our talk and kindness*
> *Its military silence, its surgeon's idea of pain.*

The master of this transformation was called Love, though we were not to understand by this concept anything involving regression. Eros was a force for discipline, affirmation, social responsibility. The compassion with which we would look at the necessarily shattered cities, the tracks of the refugees crawling westward across the Atlantic, must be the compassion of the surgeon or the remote and helmeted airman. The polymorphousness of play was important; but for children, "casual as birds." So we lost our historical bets, or failed to anticipate time's peripeteias; but certainty there was, and confidence in love, and above all a rejection of the old guard: "holders of one position, wrong for years" — in favor of some counterculture.

What went wrong? We did, no doubt, with the excuse that a generational focus of attention is bound to be dissipated in any circumstances, and especially amid the lies, the terrors, the general cheapening of thought, emotion and intellect which few can escape during a world war. The greatest poetry of the war was Eliot's *Four Quartets,* as we are often told, and it is a poetry of patience and of private meditation; but *Little Gidding* came out in 1941, after the first Blitz but before the nightmare had developed its full extravagance. In neutral America Auden began a new education in aesthetics, ethics and religion. I suppose the real wonder is that those

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years allowed anybody to think clearly or feel honestly at all. Anyway, they put an end to most possible dreams.

But we were wrong anyway. I don't mean simply wrong about Spain, about Stalin, about the proletarian revolution; we were wrong about history, including the histories of the arts in themselves and in their relation to conduct more generally considered. Insofar as we thought, with Lawrence (who was not much read in the thirties) that an insufferable deadness had invaded our lives, that we needed, like Connie Chatterley, to be violently stirred into life, that intolerable social and emotional constraints grew daily upon us, we were right. But our predictions and solutions were too simple; we did not really imagine a need for cultural change which would radically affect what we wore or read or did with our wives or thought of our own personal place in the world. (The counterculture, incidentally, is Lawrentian in its contempt for the notion of a responsibility toward one's own unique personality.) Consequently, when the war ended, we retreated into what William Empson, with a polemical blend of contempt and incredulity, calls Neo-Christianity, by which he means not only Christianity but all other forms of worshipping pain and denying the natural man. And only when that mood passed — it was shared, as a mood, by many who did not lapse doctrinally into Neo-Christianity — only when that passed and we began to assess the conduct and aspirations of the very young could we see, dimly enough, how it was that we were wrong, and why our arts and humanities had failed us. Above all, we had made a bad mistake about something we pride ourselves in cherishing, namely, history.

I will now try, with apologies for the necessary imprecision and dogmatism of the attempt, to explain the historical mistake we made.

In the arts and humanities the old world had already been rejected before 1914; the rejection was of the post-Renaissance world, and the villains were, according to taste, Descartes or Locke, and Newton, Huxley and Darwin. The line may be traced through Nietzsche, Worringer and, in the Anglo-American tradition, T. E. Hulme; but there are many other paths it followed, as students of Yeats know well. One of the consequences was a rancorous hatred for reason, or intellect or "positivism"; and already in the last years of the nineteenth century there was a venerable tradition of counter-

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science, astrological, magical, theosophist. The idea that we live "in disconnexion, dead and spiritless" because we have lost a unity of being that flowered and decayed at the Renaissance is still commonplace, and many important movements in the arts up to the twenties can hardly be understood without some reference to this "dissociation." At the same time, in the years before the first war, there were revolutionary changes in philosophy, psychology, painting, the novel.

All this is what everybody has known for a long time, and I dwell briefly on it for one reason only: the implications of these changes in the arts and in related ways of understanding the world have not been fully understood; and that is why I say the middle-aged are the victims of their own historical mistake. Perhaps we were taken in by what may be called the Hulme tradition, the authoritarian attitudes struck by some of the most influential writers; Hulme liked violence, had an abstract knuckleduster designed for him by Gaudier-Breszka and greatly affected Pound, Eliot and Wyndham Lewis. He was very important for the antihumanist crypto(at least)–fascist literary oligarchy of the twenties. From this we derived a model of modernism which included a large and impressive requirement of order. It was not an order that one could easily perceive (Eliot asked, if one would understand modern poetry, like his, for a "logic of imagination" and not a "logic of concepts") and the whole notion of order, confusingly represented by some as a neoclassic revival, stemmed from the transcendent arrangements of *Symbolisme*. But literary order was demanded, and related to more familiar forms of order, social and theological. We were encouraged, especially in the neo-Christian period, not to flinch at a society which reflected the order of a neoclassic poem, that is, a hierarchical and élitist society. Modernism, it seemed, was revolutionary in the arts only because it restored what was lost. And it could thrive only in a society which abhorred the dissidence of dissent, especially when that dissent proceeded from racial minorities. So we grew accustomed to apologizing for the Mussolini-worship, but also for the anti–Semitism and hatred of the people, that we found in the great modernists.

It was partly because this was unattractive that we also welcomed, in the thirties, a literature that seemed less arcane and less exclusive, a literature with at any rate some more immediate engage-

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ment with the horrible world about it, some concern for the secular fate of the poor and outcast. Auden, for example, loved and admired Eliot, but made no attempt to imitate his totalitarian forms or his totalitarian thinking; loose-mouthed, prolific and apparently *engagé*, he explicitly refused to endorse the intense aspirations to wholeness that we associate with his elders. He reintroduced into poetry, it seemed to us, not only social seriousness but *play;* and his thinking originated in a different set of books: Marx, Freud and less permanently venerated figures such as Layard, Groddeck and Homer Lane. We were ready for a reaction against the ivory Symbolists; in the decade of decay and revolution we rejoiced in a new Marxist–Freudian literature yet still adored the last oracular ranting of Yeats and the contemplations of Eliot, who abominated Marx and the "low dream" of the consulting room. We had all the fun of living in an overlap in history, having the last of the modernists, and the first of the clever young men who reacted against them, at one and the same time.

What we had forgotten, of course, was a modernism much more radical than the one which required a neo-Christian generation to interpret it. We had forgotten a modernism which ridiculed "order," rejected the models which included it, and helped to invent the world we are going, for some time hence, to have to live in.

What we forgot was, to put it briefly, Dada; it began, as everybody knows, during World War I, and in the violence of its programs and expressions of its programs it learned much from the war. It "spat in the eye of the public," despised *passéisme,* and condensed art for being recognizable as such by formal canons and types. It went a long way toward desacralizing the arts, which had been for some time looking more and more like religions; and for the first time (except, possibly, for some historical accidents) it created confusion between objects of art and jokes. It reacted to the horrible circumstances of 1916 in such a way as to give a violent kick at the whole notion of Art; and it didn't on the whole seem effective, partly because of its palpable excesses and apparent unseriousness. In the twenties Dadaists became Surrealists and were otherwise assimilated into a more intelligible tradition. But they invented the happening, randomness as a policy, found art, and much else. And they changed not only our relation to the norms of the art of the past, but our

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relation to norms of conduct. For in the long run these things are related, though it proved a surprisingly long run, partly, perhaps, because for a long time our attention was focused elsewhere.

This is, as I say, commonplace. But there was another thing we forgot, and still, I think, forget, though once it is pointed out it also seems very obvious. I mean that in the first years of the century a really radical change occurred in the arts which was not flamboyant and destructive but in the end had at least as much effect as Dada, and the only derivation for it that I can think of is from technology. It may be argued that the most distinctive characteristic of twentieth-century thought is the switch of attention from the environment to the instrument; in the novel, for example, this takes place when writers such as Conrad (acting, of course, on hints from earlier writers) began to concern themselves not with the formalities by which older novelists authenticated their stories but with the form of the novel itself, so that all manner of things which had seemed of the essence to the novel — chronological narration, "depth" in character and so on — were seen as inert and decorative, and all the effort went not into the direct rendering of the world but into the refinement of the instrument. The end of this story is the position that the old virtues of *rondure,* etc., are lies, and that the novel must make its way without the aid of the old shared belief that its arbitrarinesses somehow represented a knowable world; in the same way perspective and eventually all "figurative" elements disappeared from painting, and the old diatonic structures of music were excised. It is unnecessary here to provide parallels with physics and technology. "An epoch," said Einstein, "is the history of its instruments." Airplanes no longer look like birds, or anything else other than airplanes.

We did not see this very well. We did not see that merely by directing our attention to essential formal qualities and discarding all that functioned only as a mimesis of the obsolescent, the novel (and the poem, for *The Waste Land* belongs to this argument too) were providing us with a model of personal and social conduct in which there was no room for ritual imitation of older modes of behavior, but a terrifying amount of room for personal creative decisions. Add this to the more histrionic rejection of convention by Dada, and you have a situation in which a concern for the arts — always likely to induce some form of "Bohemianism" — is probably going to have

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repercussions in the field of conduct: rejection of restraints, rejection of the culture, rejection of the past. It did not happen at once; but, as Lionel Trilling has hinted, we made certain it would happen some time by teaching many relevant works as modernist and world-changing; they were kept within the culture by various pressures, but sooner or later these would ease, and the chickens of modernism would come home to roost.

They have done so, as we all know, in the last decade or so. Detail is not called for; we are talking about — for short — the Rock generation, Mr. Fiedler's mutants, the generation we think of loosely as that of the long-haired pot-smoking past-hating young. They constitute a bohemia on a colossal scale, a very generalized bohemia opposed to a bourgeoisie consisting of nearly everything but themselves. And they are a new kind of bohemia because they have benefited from a breakthrough in the technique of bohemianism; the means by which one was *épatant* are themselves the focus of interest, usurping an older concern for social effect. The new interest is in the medium, not in the message; there is no "significance" in long hair and random clothing, or anyway their main purpose is no longer to communicate disagreeableness to the elders. Just as the new arts of aleation no longer exist to proclaim alienation but to do their own thing, devise their new and purer randomness, so the sexual and pharmacological preferences of a generation assert no longer a separation from the past, and from the elders — it is taken for granted — so much as their own existence and variety. What Dada felt it must affirm with demonstrations — the death of art, the annihilation of personality — is now, in art and life, simply performed, for its own sake. Even the Dada hint that out of these intellectual Terrors and annihilations there would come a new and better age is not necessary to, though it is not wholly absent from, Neo-Dada. When the emphasis is, in my special use of the term, technological rather than mimetic, there is no longer any strong sense that what is happening is transitional, that the new arts and the new mores will themselves end, and that thenceforth a series of new times will begin.

In short, it is the modernism we neglected, and not the one we cultivated, that has, after lying dormant for half a century, erupted as the revolution of the counterculture.

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The elders, it is well known, have a good deal of trouble understanding all this, in part because of the difficulty of saying anything about randomness in terms of an acceptable intellectual matrix. For example, nobody pays much attention to Oedipal explanations of the conduct of the young; they simply beg a large number of tedious questions. And if one applies the sort of criteria developed by the New Criticism to a lot of modern poetry the effect is similar; the criteria are of no relevance except insofar as their irrelevance is part of the situation.

Let me therefore suggest a model that for all its desiccation and fundamental lack of interest may assist the present inquiry. Old ideas of order are, in the situation we are considering, discredited. In terms of information theory, they depend heavily upon redundancy. That is, there must, in a form which is likely to be called orderly or "organic" or some other honorific epithet, be a degree of what hermeneuticists call *Vorverständnis*. You have to have some notion —it need not be exact—of what remains to be seen of whatever it is you are reading, hearing or looking at, before you can follow it, or hope to get the message. The redundancy (that is, the quality of fulfilling expectation) will vary from moment to moment, and various peripeteias or graces will reduce it strikingly at times, but in so far as a work has "form" it cannot reach zero redundancy and will sometimes (at the end, for instance, of a conventional novel) possess it in a very high degree. The notion is basically simple: if I send you a message saying "Thank you very much for the flowers" the letters *l o w e r s* have a high degree of redundancy. As Norbert Wiener puts it in a cybernetic epigram, a message is the negative of its entropy.[2]

There is more to be said about conventional forms of art and behavior than that they have a degree of redundancy, but it is what nevertheless may be safely said. And now let us recall the two forces of revolution I have been talking about, Dada and technologism.

2 "Messages are themselves a form of pattern and organization. Indeed, it is possible to treat sets of messages as having an entropy like sets of states of the external world. Just as entropy is a measure of disorganization, the information carried by a set of messages is a measure of organization. In fact, it is possible to interpret the information carried by a message as essentially the negative of its entropy, and the negative logarithm of its probability."—*The Human Use of Human Beings.*

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Randomness, entropy, are essential to the program of Dada, and this is really revolutionary since it subverts conventional communication; a Dada "message" is the positive of its entropy. And the second force, though it works differently and is easier for the elders to comprehend, arrives at similar effects. When a code of communication exists it has to be founded on agreements to read the arbitrary units into which information is divided in accordance with conventions that the sender also accepts. Thus, in a novel, clues as to character, the order of reporting events, the credibility of the narrator and so forth, are clues which the author knows his reader can interpret within narrow limits. The concord between them used to be so close that either party would have been surprised to be told that there *was* a conventional element involved. The history of how the conventional element came to be recognized and progressively rejected is a long one, but few would deny that it reached its climax in the early years of this century. The effect was not to discredit "form" but to make it very much more arduous, and markedly to reduce redundancy in all the arts. Eventually, as I have argued, conduct was affected; we are dealing, in the present revolutionary situation, with conduct that reflects the reduced measure of redundancy forced upon readers, listeners and people looking at paintings two generations back. The earliest reactions were of outrage; but there is no longer any point in that, since where the conventions of redundancy do not exist there is no probability and no measure of unexpectedness. Or, only the unexpected is predictable.

I have just been overstating the case, I admit; not all the conventions are dead, and some new ones have developed for us to learn. There may be, in fact there almost certainly are, certain biological and cultural limitations on absolute randomness of conduct, and on possible degrees of severance from the past. Still, we have now a diagrammatic representation of the situation in which the elders, or humanists as they are sometimes called, have to work. In itself it is not, I think, too dismaying. Ideas of order can be benign or malignant, so can randomness. When they conflict, as they did on certain campuses this spring, it is order that fires the guns; when the universities organize their protest we see how unnatural and unstable their emergency forms of order must be, how entropy threatens their message; nevertheless we prefer that to the bullets of redundant order.

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But the immediate question is not of political sympathies; the question is how we elders, with our accumulated disabilities and errors, ought to behave in the new cultural situation. The difficulty, to put it simply, is that no matter how well we understand both Dadaism and technologism, the forces of counterredundancy, we are almost certainly committed to ideas of value that work only where there are formal qualities expressible as redundancies. We are critics (of one kind or another), teachers (of one kind or another), and our business is the transmission of values. I'm not, of course, calling these values absolute; I can see no way in which that claim could be substantiated. All that can be said is that humanists, using forms of persuasion which vary with each generation, transmit a notion of their inherited valuations to the young. There tends to be a canon, variable of course; and works that get into it are works particularly susceptible to the necessarily varying methods of talking and being persuasive about them. In the past there has also, of course, been some feedback of critical redundancies into works of art, which made the job easier. Naturally there are rebel humanists who seem to deny that their task is the transmission of values; Northrop Frye is an obvious modern instance, but what he really says is that part of the work can be systematized on a value-free basis, and that valuation and the transmission of values are unsystematic, which is by and large true. No humanist elder really likes the idea that he is the last person in history to suppose that what interests him has value, and we all strive to the extent of our resources of sensibility and ingenuity to make it look as if it has, and to persuade a new generation to join us in so believing. And this is as true of conduct as of art.

However, as redundancy diminishes and entropy increases, value-criticism, which depends so much on the existence of formal relationships (and so on redundancy), loses relevance. Nor is there any evidence that the transmission of information about minimally redundant work has yet seemed to anybody a necessary, not to say a possible, task. Briefly, in relation to the new arts, the function of criticism seems principally to consist in providing a theoretical environment for the works discussed. Thus the only service a critic can perform for Mr. Cage's music is to explain how silence functions in a music-situation, or how, technologically, he goes about ensuring a maximum randomness. A great deal has been written about Du-

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champ's "Urinal," but nothing that cannot be described as the provision of theoretical context; the work clearly does not have the qualities that art historians devised their vocabulary to identify. The only other kind of criticism that seems to be possible is the sort of rhapsody or gossip that has long been anathematized in the older tradition. So there seems to be no obvious place for *our* kind of thing in their kind of thing. And this takes us back from the realm of speculation into the world of fact. What, given our mistakes, and the way we have been conditioned, are we to do in our contacts, critical and paedogogical, with the revolutionary generation?

My answer to this question is partly, I suppose, the issue of my own temperamental noncombativeness. It seems to me a simple recognition of what has always been the case, that we have no imperial rights over the culture, only the right to argue by whatever means we choose that our thing is worth doing. This right, of course, we allow to everybody else, whatever *their* thing. We should certainly not take it upon ourselves to worry if people do not want to join us, preferring some world elsewhere.

In other words, we should not be so absurd as to teach and behave as if there were powerful forces not ourselves that more or less oblige aspiring human beings to be like us. This may seem obvious in 1970; I can only say that it has not been obvious for very long, and was not obvious in the Wesleyan of 1963–64; there, as elsewhere, it was an unspoken assumption that students, if such a thing were possible, ought to be as cultivated as, and in the same ways as, faculty. We have to give it up. There are other worlds, and other fictions, than the ones we agree to cherish. Insofar as these eschew redundancy, the critical assumptions I, and most of my kind, tend to make, will not enable us to say much about them. Whether they will in the end discover that their fictions are after all paradigmatic and radically redundant, and join us in some new alliance, I cannot say, althought it seems not altogether unlikely. But for the time being we must cultivate our still ample garden and let others do the same. We ought cheerfully to resign our institutional powers; other social universes have their own reality constructions, and an authoritarian institution would be obliged to "nihilate" them, but the humanities are not such an institution and would destroy them-

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selves by pretending to be. Ways of making sense of the world are plural, incorrigibly so in our time. Living with the revolution means living with that. It does not mean abandoning our own ways of making sense. Perhaps, when the dust settles (if it ever does) some ways of establishing a virtual human space in the world will seem obviously better than others. But at present we can't make that judgment. We can only be patient, humane, tenacious and, where it seems appropriate, absorptive.

This is not a sellout. There are some things about the counter-culture which appear to be dangerous (insofar as it wants to nihilate *us*) and some that seem foolish. It can offer a refuge for ignorance and carelessness and megalomania and bullying. The worst thing it can do, probably, is to undermine the authentic cultural relationship between the teacher and the taught. This, of course, is, essentially, between more experienced, more mature and better informed people, and less experienced, less mature and worse informed people. In the past there can be no doubt that the elders found it comfortable to institutionalize this relationship by means that now seem illicit: in short, by hypostasizing Authority. But this can and must be given up without the sacrifice of the truth, which is that if the teacher does not know more, if indeed he is not, in terms of what remains of the common culture, wiser, then he ought not to be there anyway. Well-known and eloquent teachers who say that their students are better equipped than they are to institute programs, that their students know more about the world than they do, and that they go to class as students of their students, ought at least to distribute their salaries among the class and pay tuition. A university is a place where the generations are brought together for the purpose of transmitting from elder to younger (though again there is and ought to be "feedback") information which is not transmitted genetically. It is not a place for experiments in group therapy or the submersion of individual in group aspirations. Sometimes I think that the extravagant abdications of some teachers at this moment will have the just effect that in a few years the students will be complaining that they are being systematically starved; and we may have a reversion to Authority in the old bad sense. The authority we need is natural and simple, containing no element of privilege,

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simply proceeding from a fact of life that no intelligent, not to say civilized, relationship can ignore.

So teachers must teach. They can explain, they ought to explain, that they may use disciplinary matrices to which there are possibly alternatives, as they must, in the humanities at any rate, explain that survival depends on the effectiveness of the dialogue between teachers and taught who are alike ready to question *anything* and to refrain from authoritarian assertiveness. The fresh, necessarily naïve skepticism of the young interacts with the cautious skepticism of men who know about change, have themselves changed; men who have made mistakes about history and everything else and want to make their mistakes creative.

And this takes us back to our revolution and to the reminiscences and speculations about revolution which were overhauled by the real thing. What surely is good about the changes of the last few years is that, if we are spared the worst follies that might destroy the universities altogether (and these could come from careless or desperate men on either extreme wing of the argument) — if we are thus spared we shall be able to claim that although teaching is harder work now we are doing it better than we did. We have changed, and must change again; we have learned something about our job, our responsibilities and the dangers which have always threatened us but which used to be more easily ignored. We have learned that after all our innocent and disinterested activities have a political dimension, and we have found out our allies, the students. Among them and among our colleagues too there are some who also threaten, who believe we should not be allowed to do our thing. But we must go on doing it.

When the young were in one another's arms, Yeats's old man turned reluctantly to monuments of unageing intellect. The young never wither, are perpetually renewed by nature; our art is, as far as we can, to preserve intellectual monuments unaged. We can't do this by junking the monuments; sometimes we can do it by showing how the new is transmittable on the same terms as the old (how many of the "best" exhibits at the big Metropolitan show last winter seemed permanent not because of their novelty but because they were subsumable under any old category such as "painterly"!). Mostly we

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do it by patiently exploring new ways of making the monuments new, taking them out of the temporal rat race, changing them as needed.

And always we have to remember these things: we are not a church or an empire; we are smaller than we thought, but with the rights that interest and disinterest confer; we are humanly similar to the most dissident of our neighbors; we have to go on living in change; and finally our interest and disinterest are of a kind that gives us the right to speak, and properly to act, in concert with our neighbors when what is common to our notions of humanity and justice is outraged by men of power. After all our talk and kindness through the year we have, at its end, looked out of the window and seen that this may happen.

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Kate Millett

THE BALANCE OF POWER

I

It would appear that love is dead. Or very likely in a bad way. As to those practitioners of romantic love who linger on, the two most solicitous, Genet and Nabokov, are of suspicious orthodoxy. *Lolita* is as much a matter of kidnap, rape and coercion as the terrible passion of a lost enamored soul who has followed his culture's blandishment of a child-wife to its literal conclusion. For the rest, hostility between the sexes has handily outdistanced romance in interest, a development due less to the inherent faults of the romantic myth (a sentimental idealism and traditionally, a rather inhibited sexuality) than it is to the animus toward women which their gains in this century have provoked from jealous patriarchal sentiment. The mistress or beloved is dethroned, even defamed; she has become a villain, a nuisance or a deserving victim. As we all know, it has been open season even on mothers for two decades. Those who continue to display a romantic enthusiasm for the amorous, tend like Humbert Humbert or Genet, to be members of the "sexual minorities."

There is a sense in which the homosexual is our current "nigger" of love, his[1] sexual life a bigger social risk and surrounded by a more hostile environment, at any moment liable to pounce in ridicule or

1 Following custom, the term "homosexual" refers to male homosexual here. "Lesbianism" would appear to be so little a threat at the moment that it is hardly ever mentioned. Once a target for liberal sympathies (Havelock Ellis' introduction to *The Well of Loneliness,* T. S. Eliot's to *Nightwood*), or a screen for male homosexuality (Proust's Albertine), the woman as homosexual is today as decidedly a sexual object as other women. The two excited females in the bathtub on Forty-Second Street screens pander to

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condemnation, than ever threatened Mailer's bullying "White Negro." In a great many places homosexual acts are still crimes under law, whereas Mailer's heroes, eager to offend society, must push on all the way to murder. In nearly any bar Divine could stand at bay and hear "herself" judged:

> She smiled all around, and each one answered only by turning away, but that was a way of answering. The whole cafe thought that the smile of (for the colonel: the invert; for the shopkeepers: the fairy; for the banker and the waiters: the fag; for the gigolos: *that* one; etc.) was despicable. Divine did not press the point. From a tiny black satin purse she took a few coins which she laid noiselessly on the marble table. The cafe disappeared, and Divine was metamorphosed into one of those monsters that are painted on walls — chimeras or griffins — for a customer, in spite of himself, murmured a magic word as he thought of her: "Homoseckshual."

In pariah state there is some magic still, and the myth of romantic love has always prospered on the social hostility directed at star-crossed lovers, adulterers or those who transgress the boundaries of caste and class. Its clandestine and forbidden character alone tends to grant homosexual love the glamour waning in heterosexuality, lost together with its literary inhibition and, regrettably, its tenderness.

Notwithstanding its romance trappings of sighs and roses, the love ethic of Genet's novels is even more atavistic than the romantic variety. Courtly in fact, it observes the traditional virtues of loyalty, secrecy, humility and idolatry. From the perspective of sexual politics, it is possible to regard European courtly love as either a cruel joke — or the first wedge in patriarchal consistency. For by an anomaly social history is helpless to explain, the courtly lover, though *de facto* master, chose to play the role of servant to his lady. Genet has, with considerable political realism, turned this situation back upon its feet, and in the feudalistic hierarchy of his prisons, converted French abbeys founded by the nobility of the *ancien régime* and haunted still

a male fantasy which intervenes heroically between them, taking on the pair at once. Hollywood's *The Fox* and other productions of popular cinema are likely to be directed at masculine audiences too, while Underground or art films ignore lesbians for the more explosive (because more realistically conceived) topic of male homosexuality. Whatever its potentiality in sexual politics, female homosexuality is currently so dead as issue that while male homosexuality gains a grudging tolerance, in women the event is observed in scorn or in silence.

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by the perfume of medievalism, it is the male partner who receives homage. The heroes of his romances are king-sized hoodlums, the courtly lovers at their knees not masculine, but feminine, whores and queens.

Although he is, as Sartre points out, a *"passéiste,"* or one who lives in another age, Genet's feudal system is simply more honest than that of our other authors in its open recognition of power, its clear parallel to masculine cultures such as those of the Near East and the Orient, where older warrior was served by page, priest by acolyte, tyrant by the objects of either sex who suited his whim. In *Deathwatch,* Genet's first play and the one nearest to the closed milieu of his fiction, Green Eyes, the convicted murderer and therefore the most male or noble, sounds off before his vassals like a baronial paterfamilias: "Here in the cell, I'm the one who bears the brunt . . . I know I need a strong back. Like Snowball. He bears the same weight. But for the whole prison. Maybe there's someone else, a Number One Big Shot who bears it for the whole world!" By such a structure does the patriarch face existence and live *for* his dependents, the nameless Misses, his offspring, his subjects, his chattels — minors all. At Genet's children's prison, Mettray, the inmates lived in "families" governed by a "head of the family" and his chief retainer, an "elder brother," a bully put in charge of the younger and weaker who are his concubines or "chickens." Genet's prison hierarchy is constructed in terms of sex: the pure virility of the killer at the top, on the next tier lesser Big Shots, macs or pimps,[2] then crashers (thieves who operate with a jimmy, breaking and entering) and on a lower plane, the queens and chickens who serve them. Chickens are subject to sale, "discipline" and even murder. Lowest of all are the jerks, pure scum, never selected for concubinage, but subject to rape. A jerk's life is hell.

Since all is precedence and rank, reciprocity is quite impossible

2 Note the ranks of *mac* and *casseur* (pimps and crashers). *"Mac"* is generally translated as "pimp" and in fact it does mean this, but primarily it implies toughness, and an open contempt for women. As Philip Thody points out, the distinction the mac enjoys over the casseur depends chiefly on this last trait. That "pimp" is an attribute connected with but occasionally separable from an occupation is attested to by the fact that in Mettray adolescent boys who have never known women are called mac, to which the English translation of "pimp" scarcely does justice.

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and requited love as rare in Genet as it is fleeting. Homosexual love is a life of continual rejection. There is always a better-looking queen for the lord to expropriate; there is always one more commandingly masculine for the "chicken" to run to. Yet, the obligation to loyalty rests heavily and exclusively upon the feminine partner for the male is permitted, even expected, to be promiscuous. Due to the regulations and the punishments of guards, intrigue is required, and in a world where homosexuality, like love, is both irrepressible and condemned, secrecy is a necessity against the scorn of all and sundry. Idolatry is also a feminine function. The mac is "dangerous" or hard to get, his most magnanimous gesture a momentary display of possessiveness. Tenderness or affection are beneath him: for a male to love would be to lose status. Every equality is forbidden. Proposing himself to another youth, Genet is rebuked with a dismayed "Huh? We're the same age. It wouldn't be any fun."

In his own account of Genet, Sartre constructs a theory, sturdily Marxist in bias, that it was the lifelong feeling of guilt branded on him as a child by his foster parents when they caught him stealing and sent him to spend the next fifteen years in the "children's hell" of Mettray that led Genet to homosexuality. The hypothesis is at odds with Genet's own assertion that homosexuality preceded his crimes against property. And indeed, the dizzying shame, followed by a stubbornly resistent contumacy, which is Genet's stand toward the world, originates with sex, even with the "original sin" of his birth, a bastard and abandoned child. Weighted down with guilt, already an "unnatural" phenomenon in a society based on family and property, it is somehow logical he should complete his fate by advancing to the "unnatural" life-style of homosexuality, where he can further outrage "nature" by becoming a feminine or passive partner, furnishing the last touch by accepting the most ignominious role, laying claim to "the gravest insult" — cocksucker.[3]

3 In *The Miracle of the Rose,* Genet informs us that "among toughs [this epithet] is very often punishable by death." The degree to which eroticism and shame are inseparable in Genet is a nice illustration of how deeply guilt pervades our apprehension of the sexual, an unpleasant fact of sexual politics and hardly less true of heterosexual society than it is of Genet's: "I know by some indefinable, imperceptible change, that it is a shudder of love — it is both poignant and delightful, perhaps because of the memory of the word shame that accompanied it in the beginning." Such a sentiment is probably universal.

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Just as he resolved to be the thief they had made him by naming him one, Genet, once arrived at prison, insisted on living out the sexual guilt imposed on him both by his rape and the gentleness which provoked it. Discovering that the other boys were "stronger and more vicious" which in this school as unfortunately in most, meant more masculine, Genet insisted on living out the sexual or feminine shame they heaped on him — determined he would become "the fairy they saw in me." The attitude implies a perverse submission which is both fideistic and heretical, an implicit agreement with the prevailing social tenet that homosexuality and thievery constitute essences, rather than acts, and are immutable states of being. Because "thief" or "fairy" are words used to discourage one from being them, Genet's enthusiastic acceptance of both is not only fatalistic, but enthusiastic, but covertly mutinous.

The grotesquerie of sexual role was, at Mettray, as it is elsewhere, acknowledged to be fated, even predestined. For a brief period Genet tried to evade his "wild nature," his feminity, by becoming a crasher and serving time at Fontevrault for breaking and entering, in the impossible hope of acquiring "the clear simplicity of manliness" through adopting the "steel penis" of a jimmy, an instrument from which he tells us "emanated an authority that made me a man," and would promote him above faggotry's "humble ways." But even when a jimmy intercedes, the preordained is not to be cheated. Bulkaen, whom he courts to be his chicken, deserts him for the more impressibly virile Botchako and Genet ends where he began, mistress to the Big Shot Divers, still the queen he was at sixteen on his "bridal day" at Mettray. He is still nobody, still hardly better than a jerk.

Since to Genet it is rank by individual fate, sex role is established once and for all at two polarities of inferior and superior: the apparent deviations, young toughs like Our Lady and Bulkaen, are simply tadpoles, creatures in transition to a better destiny. It would be hard to find a more brutal or unsavory definition of masculine and feminine than Genet's, since it is simply an exaggeration of that in current use. Masculine is superior strength, feminine is inferior weakness. There is one exception however: Genet has jealously reserved intelligence and moral courage for his queens; for himself. The toughness of the toughs relies on their status, their largely decorative musculature (they disdain labor) and their meanness. Like Botchako

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they express their sexual mastery in choice phrases: "You bitch, you swallow it by the mouthful"; "I'll shoot it up your hole, you punk!" Since their status is derived from their subjects, females or males feminized into submission, a pimp like Darling speaking out of the conviction that a mere woman would contribute less to his prestige, can boast when buggering Divine, "a male who fucks a male is a double male."

Just as Genet's antimorality is but an inversion of peasant folk–Catholicism — its sense of property, its literal apprehension of theological abstractions (grace, sin, etc.) — so his notions of sex role and rank are the most flat-footed ones available in his culture, quite without Lawrence's subtlety, archaic in their direct presentation of power and subordination: a vicious and omnipotent super-virility contrasted to a fluttering helplessness and abjection. In his world of prostitution and crime the woman or queen is ruled by force, by violence and by ostentatious masculine disdain. Her femininity is pure servility, graphic beyond that discreet formulation codified and prescribed by Freudianism: "masochism" is simply open self-hatred, "narcissism" a realistic sense of the self as object (vanity is a male prerogative) and "passivity" frankly fear, despair and resignation. Since the pervasive effect of Genet's habitual ironic exaggeration is to unmask our common social hypocrisy, the fainter aspersion attached to the feminine by our other authors is enlarged to a candid repugnance everywhere in his work. There is scarcely need to fret over how Genet, a jailbird, may have come in touch with popular Freudianism (itself but a redaction of widespread and durable patriarchal assumptions) when far more remote literary references abound in his work, among them the most sophisticated allusions to the French poets. Dickens is clearly an influence; the great trial scene in *Our Lady of the Flowers* is deliberately modeled on Fagin's sentencing in *Oliver Twist*.

In a sex ethic founded so solidly upon sexual guilt and inferiority, which, woman-like, Genet carries within him, sexuality itself must logically operate both as punishment and a confirmation of his status, the very moment of its enaction a fevered and mortifying accusation, a terrible reproach. As Sartre characterizes sodomy in the novels: "the sex act is the festival of submission, also the ritual renewal of the feudal contract whereby the vassal becomes the lord's liegeman."

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And like Marie Bonaparte's properly mashochistic female, Genet as queen is impaled, tortured, pierced and subjugated by the male whose penis is a "sharp instrument with the cruel and sudden sharpness of a steeple puncturing a cloud." Phallic heroism is presented variously in terms of a cannon, a dagger, a pile driver, an iron bar. The mac's very body is an erection, and even in infancy, toughs like Querelle can survey buildings in a landscape with naïve satisfaction, proud "at knowing so high a tower is the symbol of his virility." As with many of the married couples whom Lee Rainwater studied in *And the Poor Get Children,* sexuality is directed toward the male organ, thought to be the real actor and the purpose of coitus. Since the male has so little interest in her pleasure, the queen, like traditional woman, rarely enjoys orgasm. Macs hardly ever condescend to jerk off a queen, and Divine is forced to finish in the toilet, place of excrement and shame. the horrors of family life, the tedium of marriage, the lover's exploitation of personality, the slow erosion of character in promiscuity.

The hostility which the swish provokes from a crowd of college boys and toughs, their taunts, their desire to strike down, their mindless irascibility, is as George Dennison observes, the uneasy response of insecure virility erupting into violence to cover its own terror of a possible "false self," which according to the Freudian theory of bisexuality, is its hateful and sternly throttled femininity. Yet is not this very "assertion of masculinity" patently an expression, not simply of the vandal's zealous heterosexual orthodoxy, his perfervid jingoist commitment to "normal" sexual behavior — but even more convincingly, a statement of his contempt for the feminine itself?

For Genet's pimps and macs, the queen acts as a scapegoat for their own homosexual impulses. She also serves as the thing they hurt in retaliation for the horrified presentment that their own natures But like a theatrical whore or a dutiful wife, the queen groans and faints to convert her suffering to the appearance of joy.

Although "straight" society may be affronted at the thought, homosexual art is by no means without insights into heterosexual life out of whose milieu it grows and whose notions it must, perforce, imitate and repeat. Humanly judged, one is as perverse as the other; their pasts nearly identical, their politics eminently reasonable facsimiles. As Benjamin De Mott has pointed out, Williams and Albee can say as much, and even speak more frankly than others about

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might be tainted with what they palpably know is inferior, grotesque, female. The mayhem of the repressed homosexual is nicely demonstrated in Botchako's taunting a jerk in the prison yard: "I expected to see him strike the poor bastard, who didn't dare to make a movement, not even of fear. He instinctively assumed the sudden, shifty, prudent immobility of a frightened animal. Had Botchako made a single move to strike, he might have killed him, for he would not have been able to check his fury." (Genet explains that Botchako's forehead was too narrow to contain enough reason to stop his anger once it got going.) Botchako is only a crasher. The response of his superior, the pimp Lou Daybreak, is an amused "Go on, marry him! You're in love with him. Anyone can see it!" The hero of *Querelle of Brest,* at the outset a militant heterosexual, is propositioned by a fairy, goes to his room, and strangles him:

> Finally, if a queer was like this, a creature so light, so fragile, so airy, so transparent, so delicate, so broken, so clear, so garrulous, so musical, so tender — one could kill it. Since it was made to be killed; like Venetian glass it waited only the big tough fist which could smash it without even being cut (save possibly for an insidious sliver, sharp, hypocritical, slitting and remaining under the skin). If this was a queer, it wasn't a man. For the queer had no weight. He was a little cat, a bullfinch, a fawn, a blind-worm, a dragon-fly, whose very fragility is provocative and, in the end, it is precisely this exaggeration which inevitably invites its death.

What Querelle is annihilating is an abstraction of the weak and the contemptible, the feminine. In punishment for this murder, indeed, as atonement, Genet causes Querelle to become the catamite of a brothel boss.

But as she minces along a Village street, the storm of outrage an insouciant queen in drag may call down is due to the fact that she is both masculine and feminine at once — or male, but feminine. She has made gender identity more than frighteningly easy to lose, she has questioned its reality at a time when it has attained the status of a moral absolute and social imperative. She has defied it and actually suggested its negation. She has dared obloquy, and in doing so has challenged more than the taboo on homosexuality, she has uncovered what the source of this contempt implies — the fact that sex role is sex rank.

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In *The Thief's Journal,* Genet lived as a satellite to Stilitano, a dim but virile one-armed bandit whose life's ambition is to be "the conquering hero of the comic books." Serving the master by assuming the burden of dangerous trips across national borders with packets of opium, Genet reports that he acted "out of obedience, out of submission to a sovereign Power." "It's perfectly natural," I said to myself. "He's a prick and I'm a cunt." An operating pimp, Stilitano also runs a woman, the prostitute Sylvia, and so has two "cunts" in his service, Genet being the second. When a biological male is described as a "cunt," one gets a better notion of the meaning of the word. By revealing its primarily status and power definition, Genet has demonstrated the utterly arbitrary and invidious nature of sex role. Divorced from their usual justification in an assumed biological congruity (where alignment is semantic) masculine and feminine stand out as terms of praise and blame, authority and servitude, high and low, master and slave.

II

And of course there is something infinitely ironic in Genet's use of the terms, masculine and feminine, for as both his groups are male, role appears more than simply arbitrary; it is the function of an oppressive social system. Particulars of status are observed with such excess of zeal, such tribal rigidity, that the final impression is humorous. Genet's own attitude fluctuates between obsequious acceptance and tongue-in-cheek mockery so that the total effect is satiric, and increasingly so as the oblique parody one finds in his prose fiction develops into direct statement in the plays, where feminine or oppressed mentality is extended to the other political contexts of race, class and colony.

In the novels, Genet is forever arranging things so that his own feminine last shall be first, shall triumph somehow, even if it be the victory of despair and martyrdom. His queens embrace their lowliness with such fervor they convert it to grandeur, like those "Daughters of Shame," the Carolinas, a transvestite horde who march abroad in the streets of Barcelona, their "extravagant gestures" but a method to "pierce the shell of the world's contempt." Through the miracle of Genet's prose ("my victory is verbal") the masochism consistent

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with their role as slaves in converted to the aura of sainthood. How else does the good woman excel except through suffering? The church has, in fact, supplied Genet with an extremist solution to the lunatic pecking order of his world:

> The sacred surrounds and enslaves us. . . . The Church is sacred. Its slow rites, weighted down with gold like Spanish galleons, ancient in meaning, remote from spirituality, gave it an empire as earthly as that of beauty and that of nobility. Culafroy . . . unable to escape this potency, abandoned himself to it voluptuously, as he would have done to Art had he known it!

Genet can effect through art the very transformation to nobility which Culafroy desires. Metamorphosed into Divine by the uncanny changes of faggotry, the miraculous is no longer beyond Louis' reach. Nor is art. Betrayed by her lovers, baited by hooligans, Divine invents a miniature painting on her fingernails; a tragic actress, she defies insult and forestalls criticism through bravura, calling herself a whorish old whore, knowing there is no worse that can be said of her. An aged and fallen queen, the butt mocked even in fag hangouts, her pearl coronal broken and strewn upon the floor, Divine rallies the absurd courage to proclaim, "Dammit ladies, I'll be queen anyhow!" ingeniously replacing the paste with her dental bridge, her crown of thorns. "Hewn of tears," the grim farce of her life has become her defense against the derision of the world. The most splendid character in all his novels, Genet has provided a place for her "among the Elect."

The martyred saint attracts Genet particularly, for unlike the scientist, the general, the industrialist, this is a hero who may be a heroine, and to the Gallic imagination this has perhaps a special likelihood, its own patron and national hero a woman "in drag" burned for a witch. In Genet's "eternal couple of the criminal and the saint," mac and queen, saint naturally takes the feminine form, "la sainte." For the mac provides only a body, the queen is the soul. Genet's feminine conquest is a matter of overcoming rank with the miracle of spirit. Here he is merely following the paradoxical logic of folk Christianity, as, in the eyes of God, a withered hag shines brighter than a king. Describing his place of sorrows, the Barrio Chino, Spain's most odious slum, Genet explains how

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> . . . my life as a beggar familiarized me with the stateliness of abjection, for it took a great deal of pride (that is, of love) to embellish those filthy despised creatures. It took a great deal of talent. . . . Never did I try to make of it something other than it was, I did not try to adorn it, to mask it, but on the contrary, I wanted to affirm it in its exact sordidness, and the most sordid signs became for me signs of grandeur.

When he is arrested for vagrancy, the vaseline found in his possession is but another sign of utter degradation because it only makes him more pansy, more vile in the view of the police and the secular world whose judgment they represent. It is for this reason more precious to him, stigmata both banal and triumphant. Associating it with his mother, also a prostitute, and overcome with the shame and tenderness both evoke, Genet claims: "I would indeed rather have shed blood than repudiate the silly object"; "Its mere presence would be able to exasperate all the police in the world." Christianity, the religion of the inferiority complex (humility) carried to the lengths of the Untouchable, transmutes this to beatitude. Casually jettisoning the ballast of its ethic, Genet has pirated its myth, content to prove that saintliness only means "turning pain to good account."

But Genet's faith is incomplete, flawed by ironic analysis. Receiving the Eucharist, he experiences "nausea," tasting also "the magnificent structure of the laws in which I am caught," his fine and jaundiced eye remarking the icons of the Virgin in police stations. Completely removed from the bourgeois world, he can observe its totalist character, aware of how crime and the law are but each other's shadow. "Excluded by . . . birth and tastes from the social order," Genet went on to dare to "touch" it by "insulting those who composed it." Louis Culafroy, child of a French village as Genet himself was, experiments with the sacred only to find it empty. Mounting the altar of a deserted church and desecrating the host, he waits for the supernatural to assert itself by a sign:

> And the miracle happened. There was no miracle. God had been debunked. God was hollow. Just a hole with any old thing around it. A pretty shape like the plaster head of Marie Antoinette and the little soldiers, which were holes with a bit of thin lead around them.

Replacing this discredited god with crime and virility, Genet must also find it hollow. The faces of his eminent killers, the heroes

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of the guillotine, are really "vacant-eyed," "like the windows of buildings under construction, through which you can see the sky." God-like in his world of fiction and fantasy, Genet has contrived it so that the pimp is a creature preturnaturally stupid, for with a revenge truly feminine he has undermined his masters by turning upon them with the one insult woman has traditionally resorted to when she calls her lord a fool. Divine is often a burlesque of femininity, celebrating July 14 in an odd way all her own, marking the day when the country is decked in the red, white and blue of the tricolor, by tricking herself out in "all the other colors, out of consideration for them because they are disdained!" But the cruel males whom she serves and Genet hymns are only window-dressing dummies, fetishes of masculinity, rather than men.

Genet's pseudo- or anti-religion of homosexuality and crime has a third element in its trinity — betrayal. Although his role calls for perfect loyalty, he delights in the perfidious, a subversive even in his own realm, so full of feminine guile that he corrupts and feminizes everything within reach, associating convicts with flowers, transforming the killer Harcamone's heraldic chains and handcuffs into a network of roses, unmanning superman. Darling was sadlly mistaken in his expectation of becoming a "double male." After a few years with Divine the mighty pimp is as effeminate as his mistress. Adrien Baillon, a promising young tough, is so infected by a brief cohabitation with Divine that he comes to be "Our Lady of the Flowers," consents to attend a party in drag, and becomes a girl queen the same night.

Under Divine's influence even Seck Gorgui, her hulking he-man lover, is softened. In the magnificent set piece where the three (Seck, Our Lady, Divine) return bedraggeled by their revels through the early morning streets, Seck succumbs to an infatuation with Our Lady. The eternally rejected woman, Divine has already lost her man by the time they catch a cab. Genet, underlining a rare event, first advises us to "bear in mind that a pimp never effaces himself before a woman, still less before a faggot," and then describes how Seck, who according to precedence, should enter the taxi first, permits Our Lady to precede him. This unique instance of chivalry is but effeminacy in Seck; a sign of regard for his new favorite utterly out of character in one of his station.

Our Lady of the Flowers was composed in prison while Genet was awaiting trial. The book is one long wish-fulfillment. It would

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seem that malice alone prompted him to invent the fantasy figure called Marchetti — merely that he might be revenged on this handsome male by condemning him to a life sentence. "The charm that subjugates, the iron hand in the velvet glove," the absolute "Beauty" which inspires him to gush, "I am touched at the thought of it and could weep with tenderness over his handsome muscles," is first paraded before us only that Genet may, with stunning acrimony, exterminate it.

Genet's femininity is, as Sartre phrases it, a "hostile eroticism," delighted to ridicule and betray the very myth of virility it pretends to serve. By exposing virility's cowardice, its oppressive resemblance to the official adult world, the unfriendly society it mimics, his art is revenge springing out of "a humiliated adolescent's amorous hatred of the handsome big shots at Mettray" who first stigmatized him as feminine. Like most of those restless in servitude, resentful of opprobrium, Genet has the little person's retaliation of derision and clever calumny.

But to be a rebel is not to be a revolutionary. It is more often but a way of spinning one's wheels deeper in the sand. His hero criminals who achieve their martyr's crown at the guillotine murder inoffensive persons only that they may themselves be judged and murdered in return, leaving the system not only intact but actually stronger, for the lumpenproletariat has had its moment of symbolic self-expression through a vicarious participation in a pointless antisocial act, has enjoyed the execution too, maybe even more, and now is ready to become docile once again. And Divine's saintliness, her own martyrdom, is only the destructive impulse, the masochism of her role carried to its fulfillment in self-immolation. Hers is the moral victory of true faith, but it is not freedom.

III

Because it did not cover Genet's last three plays, Sartre's biography leaves its subject still a rebel, failing to report his final metamorphoses into revolutionary. With *The Balcony, The Blacks* and *The Screens,* we have a new Genet evolved beyond the imperfect subversive Sartre saw in the novels, *Deathwatch* and *The Maids.* Genet's originally subjective antisocialism has gradually taken on objective

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form in the theater, aiming toward what he states in a recent essay to be his final ambition — namely to disappear behind his work. While irony increases, romantic myth drops away, and with it, that dichotomy between the two one finds in his earlier works, particularly the wonderfully urbane and self-conscious *Thief's Journal.* It is a feature of *The Miracle of the Rose* as well, which alternates between exaggerated celebrations of the prison world and jaded expressions of how "disillusioned" and bored with it Genet is becoming. Perhaps the very pitch of ironic attitude is reached in "L'Enfant Criminel," a radio talk where, in the manner of a modest proposer, Genet urges greater inhumanity in reformatories, that youthful offenders may "keep in touch with the revolt that makes them so beautiful."

If Genet is to advance past rebellion he must discard the remnants of his ironic and paradoxical faith, for the step from rebellion to revolution is a step beyond nostalgia (for what one has known and hated and enjoyed defacing) toward the creation of new alternate values. Rebels can be "contained" — especially if they are sentimental ones.

The idea of "femininity" as presented in the novels: abject abdicating martyrdom, broken by a perceptible restiveness and quiet sedition, takes a new course in the late works for the theater, becoming an attitude of rebellious intransigence, which with Genet's expanding sympathy and humanity, his increasing interest in politics, grows into an identification with oppressed groups of both sexes: maids, blacks, Algerians, proles, all those who are in the feminine or subordinate role toward capital, racism or empire. The negative aspect of femininity as a slave mentality is now one which its victims struggle against with increasing fury, at first with futile self-destructiveness in *The Maids,* then with growing understanding and success in each succeeding play.

Oppression creates a psychology in the oppressed. Marxism, though adroit at analyzing the economic and political situation of such persons, has neglected, perhaps out of dismay, even disgust, to notice how thoroughly the oppressed are corrupted by their situation, how deeply they envy and admire their masters, how utterly they are polluted by their ideas and values, how even their attitude toward themselves is dictated by those who own them. Genet has been a servant. When he states that servants are the "seamy side of their masters," their "unwholesome exhalations," and his maids, deep in

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self-disdain, refer to themselves as each other's "bad smell," he is describing a social and psychological phenomenon. His mature plays are studies in what one might call the colonial or feminine mentality of interiorized oppression which must conquer itself before it can be free.

The maids fail. Weighted down with self-hatred, their favorite game is really not to play at murdering their mistress, but to play at being her. The second game is so much more exciting they never get around to the first. In the end, Claire, the more gentle and Divine-like of the two, drinks poison so that the more craven and "masculine" maid Solange, may pretend to a murder, enjoy the guillotine and relish a tabloid notoriety. The play's raw material was the case of the Papin sisters, Lea and Christine, who killed their mistress and her daughter at Le Mans in 1933, capturing the popular imagination in their gory wake. Genet has made extensive changes in his treatment of the events, underlining the futility of the insurrection by leaving the employers untouched, and eliminating the daughter to add Monsieur, Madame's lover, the Man at the pinnacle of the hierarchy, who never appears, although he is referred to continuously, and exerts enormous authority over all three women from off stage. Madame claims to be his slave, and when the maids try to get him arrested by writing letters to the police, Madame rejoices in the melodramatic prospect of following him to Siberia.

The Maids is a study of female jealousy and resentment at servile status. "Filth does not love filth," Solange proposes, explaining why it is impossible for the maids to rebel or take concerted action together. "When slaves love one another, it's not love," despising themselves, they despise each other, and there can be no solidarity between them, for like all well-trained women, they do not identify with each other but with males or with the rich like Madame. This is why Genet stresses that the maids are proletariat as well as feminine, their immediate enemy their bourgeois mistress. Not until *The Screens* does Genet's identification with purely feminine circumstances clearly and decisively emerge.

Madame herself is kind, with the kindness of the comfortable middle class who can afford good manners. (To a lady who congratulated herself on giving her maid her discarded dresses, Genet quietly replied, "How nice, and does she give you hers?") But the maids, playing at being mistress to each other, are not nice. Outcasts

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in an emotional complicity with the ruling order, they invent insults ("Servants ooze"; "They are not of the human race") exposing the poisonous effect their declared inferiority, agreed upon by others and agreed to by themselves, has had upon them. So much do they believe in their superiors' edition of their lives, they cannot escape servitude save in self-laceration, and their revolt is only the criminal's folly which inevitably rebounds back upon itself. But here, in contrast to the novels, it is presented for the first time with explicitness devoid of romantic sentimentality. The maids' suffering is exquisite, but their oppression has been too effective; out of their predicament as selves defined by others, there is as yet no exit.

The Balcony, which concentrates on the political connotations of sex role as power, is another case of failed rebellion, but a great advance over the maids' claustral dilemma in that an actual revolution might have taken place if it had any alternate values to set up in place of the *ancien régime* it has temporarily destroyed. Armand names the problem: "I personally don't believe in their masquerade, not one bit. But is there any stronger force to replace them?" A history of belief and cooperation paralyzes one. In Carmen, the prostitute, participation in masculine phantasy has created such identification with the role that it becomes her reality; excused from the charade, she craves those heady moments when she was The Immaculate Conception of Lourdes to a bank clerk. In the same way, the participation of a whole populace in the ancient myths of the church, the law and the army, bring about instantaneous capitulation when imposters standing in for these members of the "Nomenclature" are paraded through the city in state. Humanity is a bit like a baby, or the masochist in studio four who wishes only to be tied and spanked, so schooled in the old rites it loves them.

In stipulating that the roles in *The Maids* be played by young men, Genet was not indulging in a gay joke, but only, as Sartre observes, presenting "femininity without women," an abstraction, a state of mind. Since "nigger," like "cunt," is a status word to him, Genet employed a similar device with regard to black and white in *The Blacks,* where he chose to have black actors ("behind the mask of a cornered white is a poor trembling Negro") represent the White Court who judge the ritual murder of whiteness as performed by another group of blacks, the Players. Since their situation in white

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culture makes them relative beings or mirrors of white ideas, the blacks seek to "entertain" their projected audience in the White Court, as well as an actual paying audience of Caucasians[4] with the one black act of greatest interest to the white, the brutal rape and murder of "his woman." This farce, whose function is to release black animosity, edify whites with a caricature of their bogeys, and affront them by the parody of their power establishment (the White Court) is, in fact, only a diversion from the real action, the beginning of an organized black revolution, inaugurated by the purge of Uncle Tom.

The Blacks is a turning point in Genet's exegesis of the politics and psychology of oppression, marking a move away from defeated self-hate to dignity and self-definition. And finally, to rage. Blacks, colonials, women, all prisoners of definitions imposed on them by others, must, if they are not to become the victims of their own self-loathing (like the maids) or of their traditional illusions (like the people of *The Balcony*) find freedom by an angry assertion of selfhood and solidarity. Exploring the vexed and complicated problem of sexual and racial politics, Genet suggests that whites have divided blacks, as the colons did the Algerians, by introducing or capitalizing upon a variety of sexual hostility which provides a particular set of advantages for white ends. Among the blacks this has been effected by the proposition that the white master's aesthetic is embodied in "his woman," a bit of property he advertises so that it may be coveted, coveted that the act may be punished. Meanwhile the black woman is imprisoned as her master's whore — "Every brothel has its negress"; "I made my troops tear off a piece every Saturday," the White Governor chuckles.

For the white distorts the love and sexuality in his subjects, forcing the black male to accept both the white woman's beauty, and scorn of the black woman. "I hate you," Village confesses to Virtue, "I began to hate you when every thing about you would have kindled love and when love would have made men's contempt unbearable."

4 "This play, written, I repeat, by a white man, is intended for a white audience, but if, which is unlikely, it is ever performed before a black audience, then a white person, male or female, should be invited every evening. The organizer of the show should welcome him formally, dress him in ceremonial costume and lead him to his seat, preferably in the front row of the orchestra. The actors will play for him."—Prefatory note to *The Blacks*

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Unable to "bear the weight of the world's condemnation," he has shared its disdain. Exorcising the myth which has bewitched them, the black lovers must first repudiate the white fallacy that the female is an aesthetic object and that beauty itself is white. Until this lie goes, Village cannot love Virtue, Charley's despised prostitute, who of all the blacks, is "the only one who experiences shame to the bitter end." The signal of the play's victory is his final acceptance of her.

Alone of our contemporary writers Genet has taken thought of women as an oppressed group and revolutionary force, and chosen to identify with them. His own peculiar history, his analysis of expropriated peoples, has inevitably led him to empathize with what is scorned, relative and subjugated. Each of his last plays incorporate the sexual into political situations: in *The Balcony* it is power and sex, in *The Blacks,* race and sex, in *The Screens,* sexual rank and the colonial mentality. Lawrence, Miller and Mailer identify woman as a minority force to be put down and are concerned with a social order in which the female would be perfectly controlled or subordinate. Genet, however, has integrated her into a vision of drastic social upheaval where her ancient subordination can produce explosive force. And in fact, in *The Screens,* it is the women who are the revolution.

It is little wonder *The Screens* incited a storm both in France and in Algeria. Presented in government-subsidized theater in a superb production by Jean-Louis Barrault's company, *The Screens,* as Philip Thody remarks, satirizes the French army as a body of "incompetent and attitudinizing [latent] homosexuals, and the one hundred and thirty years of French presence in Algeria as a totally ludicrous experience." Broad, and often vulgar farce from start to finish, the play erupted into a riot when Genet's legionnaires patriotically farted "French air" in sober tribute over their lieutenant's corpse. In Algeria, *The Screens* is equally unpopular, for it accuses the revolution of becoming the very pattern of its colonial predecessor, leaving the masses, Said and the women, as wretched as before. The last scenes are a duel between the prophetic matriarchs, grand in their poetic rage and their vision of an ongoing revolution, and the pale and automated males of the new order, carbon copies of their French enemy, bursting with narcissism and military discipline, *la glorie* and the organized slaughter called valor.

Obviously influenced by Fanon (probably via Sartre) Genet is

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remarkably indulgent toward the violence the women perpetrate in the terrorist stages of the uprising. One of the most impressive and frightening scenes in the play is the depiction, one after another through drawings on the screens, of the atrocities the guerrillas commit. As screen after screen fills with blood and fire, Kadidja, the first martyr and presiding figure of the insurrection pronounces her unrelenting hatred and satisfaction at the bloody offerings. Genet's justification would doubtless be that oppression rightly seeks revenge, a stupid argument however fashionable. Violence accomplishes nothing that revolutions are created to accomplish: in fact, violence is probably the leading counterrevolutionary symptom, as Genet himself demonstrated in *The Balcony*. And as a means to an end, violence is self-defeating, replacing old oppression and injustice with new.

But Genet's contempt for military murder is quite a different affair. In the lieutenant of the French legionnaires, he has created a splendid caricature career officer, an idiotic martial narcissist ("Let every man be a mirror to every other man"), a Maileresque case of repressed homosexuality finding its only outlet in cruelly eroticized violence, where love is hate, death is life and war is sex. Here is the "brick and mortar," spit and polish maniac giving orders to his troops:

> I want the army to send your families wristwatches and medals cake with blood and even with jissom. . . . Preston! . . . my revolver. (. . .) Warfare, screwing . . . I want pictures of naked babies and holy virgins sewn into your linings (. . .) on your hair brilliantine, ribbons in the hair on your ass (. . .) And your eyes like the bayonet. And screwing. Get me: war's a rip-roaring orgy. Triumphal awakening! My boots more brilliant Preston! I want war and screwing in the sun! And guts oozing in the sun! Get it?
>
> THE SERGEANT: Got it.

The brothel is a sort of barometer of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary progress. During the stupor of colonial despair, it was the refuge of dreams and hope where Si Slimane, the first martyr–agitator, was honored. When the insurrection actually occurs, the whores lose their leper status, are united with the village women and become one with the national cause. For a while they dispense free service and even progress so far as to consider closing shop. But as the revolt is coopted by efficient native patriarchal authority ("we want to be the stronger," the new soldiers preach to the village) the

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prostitutes fall back to their traditional outcast standing. One is murdered by the village wives and the rest settle back into the normalcy of divided female camps, inflationary prices and an ill-disguised hostility for the men who use them.

Turning upon a soldier of the new militia, Ommu, the last of the matriarchs to carry the full weight of the people's rage, taunts them as a new set of bosses: "You lousy little stinker, you snot nose . . . go join the other side where there's stately beauty . . . maybe you've already done it, you're joining them and copying them excites you. To be their reflection is already to be one of them." For the "expected" has come about and Ommu sees her own sons have "reached the stage of uniforms, discipline, jaunty marches and bare arms . . . parade and heroic death." Not to mention "martial beauty" which as she points out, equates lovemaking with murder quite as the Legion had done. Emblem of woman, she lived to see mulish arrogance once again stifle her freedom and suborn her humanity. Having been a "dish rag" for a thousand years, she has time, patience and experience. Since she is deathless resistence and a new spirit in the world, there is hope yet. And the revolution which liberates Said and Ommu will not only be the last, but the first.

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THREE POEMS by Denise Levertov

GIFTS

I want to give away the warm coat
I bought but found
cold and ungainly.

A man's wife will wear it,
and in exchange the man will tear
an ugly porch off an old empty house,

leave it the way it was,
bare and sightly.

ADAM'S COMPLAINT

Some people,
no matter what you give them,
still want the moon.

The bread,
the salt,
white meat and dark,
still hungry.

The marriage bed
and the cradle,
still empty arms.

You give them land,
their own earth under their feet,
still they take to the roads.

And water: dig them the deepest well,
still it's not deep enough
to drink the moon from.

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AN EMBROIDERY

(On a ground by Andrew Lang and H. J. Ford)

It was the name's music drew me first:
Catherine and her Destiny.
And some glow of red gold, of bronze,
I knew there — glint from the fire
in a great hearth awakening
the auburn light in her hair
and in the heaped-up treasure
weighed in the balance. The events
were blent in this light,
out of sequence.
But always
there seemed a flaw in the tale as told.
If, as it said, she chose sorrow in youth,
what power would she have to welcome joy
when it came at last to her worn hands,
her body broken on Destiny's strange little wheel?
How could she take pleasure, when grief was a habit,
in the caprice of a cruel king's making her queen?
And my Catherine, who would have chosen joy at once,
now while her hair sparked as she brushed it
and her face was already sad with beauty's sadness
and had no need for the marks of care —
(yes, surely she did choose so:
the tale as told breaks down, grows vague —)
how she laughed when she found her Destiny
tucked under seven quilts of down, laughed at the ball of silk
held out impatiently by those fingers of bone,
all that power half-asleep on the cloudy mountain!
Catherine threw down her cloak on Destiny's bed
for an eighth coverlid,
and merrily took the thread,
stepped out of her youth's brocade slippers
and set out barefoot, strong from her years of pleasure,
to wander the roads of the second half of her life.

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Paul Neuburg

DROP DEAD

"Please, Dave, hurry up. I'm going out of my mind!"

"All right. I'll be there."

Nancy hung up, and nodded, and smiled. He was coming. It wouldn't be so bad now.

She leaned against the phone box for a moment, then started across the road. A car honked, but she shook her head and walked on. Brakes squealed, then there was more honking. Nancy only turned back at her door. She winked to the passing car, and went in.

She stopped, facing the bells, and found her own. The name had not been changed yet. "Aquillardo," she read. Funny. She pressed the button and waited, half for the Aquillardos, half for herself, to work the buzzer from upstairs. It remained silent. Nancy laughed and shrugged her shoulders and unlocked the door.

The way up the stairs was interminable. An old house, no lift, yellow-brown walls covered in glosspaint, 40-watt neon strips on each floor. By the fourth the spiral had cut its groove into her head, and with arms wide open she danced-gyrated across the landing to the last flight.

The door, finally. Would it always be so far, so high up? Why did she have to live here, God? Or live anywhere?

But Dave was coming. She entered.

Everything the same. The walls covered with soot, furry in the glare of the ceiling light. Strands of spaghetti clotted in their sauce atop the stove. A sinkful of dishes and ashtrays, spilling over the lid of the bathtub. The floor black with grease and dirt. And something, she just noticed, pushing its stalks up between the boards.

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She darted through the kitchen, and through the doorless frame into the front room.

There it was worse, yet better A chaos of her own making, yet better now Dave was on the way. She almost liked it now. She stood for a while, looking at it, her arms down her sides, hands lifted at right angles, as if preparing to jump. Then she began walking about the room, threading her way through the furniture the suitcases the bags the books the garbage the pots of paint the tools the heap of rugs.

She stopped by the chair on the table. It was green, mostly, but she had started on it, painting it black. She had started on its seat and the legs that morning, then gave up, forgot about it somehow, she couldn't remember how. Must have been the time, or maybe she'd wanted to eat. No, no, she hadn't eaten all day.

Nancy hung her head to one side, contemplating the chair. Finish it, she could finish it now Dave was coming she had time. But the brush had caked and the paint itself was solid at the bottom of the pot. Too bad.

She laughed and took up another brush, she had bought three that morning. There was no more black, so she opened another tin, calling itself FIRE RED. Superb glowing mirror. She began painting the spindles. There was too much paint on the brush, and it flowed down. But Nancy didn't wipe it off, rather enjoyed the pattern. Then she dipped the brush and let the spots fall on the black seat. "Man in presence of . . ." she began thinking what to call it. "Man in presence of presence." That was it.

She put the brush and the paint on the table and stood back to see the chair. Three colors at war caught in a living moment, unplanned and unrepeatable. "Presence," she laughed, then reached into the pocket of her jeans. A cigarette.

As she brought it out, she turned the tight aggressive little roll around between her fingers, gazing at the strands of tobacco serried both ends. It was like Dave, somehow. Her father had said a nice clean-cut young man.

Should she break it? Only a few grains, no more . . . But Dave was coming, he'd smell it, and get mad. He'd be mad enough anyhow, because of the morning. Or maybe not, no he wouldn't be.

He was nice, she loved him. But she'd have to turn him on some-

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day. He'd resisted till now, saying it meant nothing to him, the few times he'd tried it, and something about coping not dropping out. But he'd never tried it with her. They'd only been going five weeks.

He wouldn't be mad, would he. Sounded fine over the phone.

She was afraid of Dave. It was respect she called fear. He was nice, only he was going somewhere, and that drew her but scared her too. She'd have to turn him on before long.

The smoke went to her head. No food all day. But it was nice, Dave was coming, he'd take care. She sat down and inhaled again. A pure cigarette, no more, and yet it had started her, started things on the move. The walls, blue but less dirty in here, began to breathe.

Breathe! In a sudden panic Nancy rushed to the window and opened it all the way. He'd smell it, the way she was and smell it from the morning, and think she'd just had some.

Or maybe she had. O yes, yes, she'd had a little more around two, but that was hours ago. Half past five now, or even later. That's why she'd called him, it was so late. And still, the room was moving as it had been then, it was alive. Human, tender and playful, a human being. Herself, the whole room, everything in it. Not hostile and hard and untractable, and governed by supreme laws of matter, but alive. Herself.

She drew again. Maybe it *was* the morning now. Or two in the afternoon, or both. Time too lived, and was hers, it lived in her. She was the morning and she was the afternoon, all time.

Tramping up the stairs, bundles under her arms, the super helping with the cases. They turned twice, but she didn't look at the kitchen or the two rooms in any detail. Just registered the mess they were in, and went out to buy things. A broom, a mop, a scraper, soap, detergent, bleach, floor polish, brushes, paint, a new lock. Dave's things, she thought, they smelt Dave or the names sounded his kind.

He'd offered to help if she'd wait till next morning, Saturday. But she'd wanted to show him. They were going out to dinner that night, at friends of his, and she'd told him to collect her from the new place. It would be ready. He'd laughed a little as he agreed, but that only hardened her.

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Nancy opened the door again and brought the things through the kitchen, right into the front room. They made a neat array on the floor. Now then. Start with this room maybe, and then the bedroom and then the kitchen. Clean first, then paint. The walls, they could be all white, and she could have lamps pointing at the ceiling. Or maybe one wall she'd leave blue. She took a piece of paper and held it up. It covered her vision of half the room. Yes, that could make a nice contrast. Half blue, half white. Or just one wall. There had to be a lot of white, the rooms weren't too big. Perhaps all white. And then black furniture, the table in the middle and four chairs. Have dinner, with Dave at one end and she at the other, and another couple in between. Chili con carne and wine and that black bread she'd seen them sell down the street. But clean first.

Dust and soot caked on top of the bureau and the wardrobe, sunk like the rest of the stable furniture in the dirt on the floor as thick and dark as soil. Everywhere the jetsam of moving out. Bits and balls of paper, magazines, beer cans, matchbooks, hair rollers, a string of broken Christmas lights, clothes pegs, plastic wrappers, deodorant, pens and pencils, broken china, paperbacks, old shoes, candles, boxes, a bra wrapped in a stocking.

She took the broom. Best start by the window and then work her way down. Sweep, then wash the floors, then polish them. That'll take an hour, one and a half if she wanted to do it well. It would all be ready in the evening, easily, by the time he came. She walked over.

O God, the windows. Earth-grey. Perhaps wash *them* first, then it won't dirty the floor again. There was this topjob thing she'd bought, she'd seen it on TV at home. Clean in seconds. "Dissolve in half a bucket of ——" A bucket? In the kitchen perhaps.

Nauseating. It was the first time she really saw it. How could people live that way? She should have insisted on them cleaning up before she moved in. "Sublet. A beautiful house," they'd advertised. But she was lucky enough to have got the place so cheap. And they'd put in a new refrigerator. Which only made it worse, standing there tooth-white in the middle of all this, waiting to be shoved into place. And the spaghetti . . . She swallowed hard. There was no bucket in sight, and she couldn't bring herself to open the door

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under the sink, or even touch it. In the bathroom perhaps, maybe they kept it there. And she could wash her hands.

Hanging on nails in the door they'd left towels, colorless and weighed down with dirt. Nancy shuddered and tore them off. But there was nowhere to throw, only the floor, itself patterned in mud, or back in the room. They landed on her bed. Nancy rushed in and swept them off. Sleep there tonight? Her skin broke out, crawling itching everywhere.

She had to clean the bathroom. That had to be the first thing, her start and refuge. She let the water run, waiting for it to warm, and held her hand in the stream. The only clean thing, unpolluted message from outside. Gooey soap sat between the horns of the tap and blocking the trough in the washbasin, its bowl grey and yellow. The walls were full of fingermarks, the toilet encrusted with dirt. On the seat it mingled with the paint, she'd have to scrape it off, even bare wood was better.

Her eyes danced in search of relief. On the glass tray under the mirror lay an open jar of cream and hairpins scattered in makeup, powder, grease and eye-black.

"You bitch!" she screamed. Then she pressed her hand on the glass and like a slow vengeance swept off everything. There. The pins bounced and zang, the jar broke on the floor.

But the glass itself was suddenly almost translucent. Amazing. Perhaps the whole place needed no more. One mighty sweep. Action.

Running, Nancy brought in some Ajax and a sponge. She took the tray out of its brackets, bathed it under the tap, rubbed it with the foaming powder, bathed it again and dried it on her jeans. Now. Holding up the glass, she still saw specks of dirt here and there. She sponged and rinsed it once more, and dried it in the same way, holding it up to find the stubborn spots and rubbing these on the tip of her backside.

In the end the glass was crystal clear. But as she put it back, the grease on the brackets dirtied the edges. She had to clean the whole thing and wipe the glass once more. She Ajaxed down the surface of the thin metal and its base and the screws holding it to the wall. The water ran, cutting a streak through the dirt on the wall, but that was good damage. It made the thing stand out, when she had finished, and made her happy with the glitter of the glass

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and the aluminum, and gave her a new impetus. Sweep and sweep. She wiped the wall with the sponge between the two streaks and suddenly the oilpaint showed a clean beige. Nice. She reached up and drew a circle at arm's length, cutting a rainbow in the dirt. The same color, shining. Then she saw that with the mirror in the center it was a face, something like a face. She drew eyes for it, and ears and a drooping mustache. Then a pipe. Father? He had no mustache, nor smoked, but there was an air about this face of age and authority. Or Dave? No. She drew an X through the whole thing, then began washing the wall from end to end, standing on the toilet to reach the top. The water and the foam of course went on the mirror, and the glass tray too, which she'd have to do once again. But she didn't mind. There was something spectacular about the color of the wall coming up, and it was large too, a whole big area, the only thing in her sight, and she was getting somewhere, she'd only had to start. When she'd reached the bottom, and wiped it all off again, squeezing the sponge in the toilet, she washed the mirror and the tray and had a look at herself. Well done, beautiful. She could even see her reflection in the sheen of the wall.

She wanted a cigarette. God, had she earned it. The muscles in her right shoulder were glowing.

In the front room her watch lay on the table. Ten to twelve. Twelve? What the hell had happened? She couldn't have spent a whole two hours on that, two hours on that little thing and the wall. Let's see. She'd got in at ten, then looked around, then here then there then — so maybe an hour and a half. But an hour and a half! And she hadn't even started, that wasn't a start, that wall, nothing. Ten to twelve. And she had no food. And where would she eat, in the kitchen? She hadn't even done the bathroom, she couldn't use it, couldn't touch the seat. Bare wood was better. And that would take hours. Everything would take hours. Ten to twelve. She just noticed bird droppings guanoed along the curtain rail and the bookshelves. Hours and hours and hours. No mighty sweep and action. No, one tough thing after another, each taking time and time. Twelve. And it had to be ready when he came.

She listened to her watch. But it hadn't stopped. And if it had, that would only make it worse, make it later. Of course. She wasn't thinking. Think. Dave wouldn't have spent time on that piece of

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glass. He would have thrown it out, or left it, or it would have got done somehow, but he would have started with important things. The walls of course. The windows. The painting. The floors? The furniture? The cases the stove? The dishes the bathtub the toilet the bowl the sink? The bedroom the front room the kitchen the bathroom the walls the windows the painting the floors the? Calm down. Yes, calm down, it's not so bad, he'd have said.

All the time the cigarette was in her hand. Calm down. But she could never do it, not today, no never at all. There was too much and all of it so stubborn, demanding hours. Stubborn, yes, and the hours too movingly stubborn. As if they wanted to break her. And she couldn't call for help, and Dave was working now and anyway she wanted nobody, not even him, to help. Alone. She was going to do it by herself. Somehow, breaking it someway, the place and the hours.

She hadn't even started. Her clothes stood in the cases, the ward-robes had to be cleaned and shoved into places where she wanted them, the curtains had to be put up, she had to buy food and get her laundry and dress for dinner and the walls were blue and the windows earth-grey and the floors an unnameable color and the kitchen and the bedroom and where was she going to sleep.

Calm down. Calm down. Calm down.

She had rice paper in her bag. She took a leaf, then broke the cigarette, and stranded out the tobacco. A few grains would make her feel better. Calm down. Her fingers were shaking. Calm now. She rolled the grains in with the tobacco, then took a few more, and rolled it again. This'll be strong, baby. She licked the paper and stuck it down.

Calm now, he'd have said, and don't. It won't give you anything, you're just giving up. But, baby, Dave, you're not here, and it's too much and so stubborn, it won't listen. Having held it as long as she could, Nancy blew out the smoke. O you don't know, you'll have to try, once you'll have to try it with me. You will, and then you'll know, you won't love me till then, you'll go on thinking I'm stupid, not good enough for you. Because you haven't tried, and you think you know everything. But wait, and then you'll love me.

Love. She took a step toward the window, softly, just one step. Then another, feeling the boards under her sole. Then she rose out of her shoes and swept her feet slowly around in a circle. First left,

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then right. You see, it's not so bad. Not dirty. It'll be all right. She took another step, lifting her leg ahead in a slow circle, like a dancer, dancing about the surface of the sea. It'll be all right. Calm and deep and infinitely clear.

Just before she reached the window, she turned back, knowing she didn't want to see it for some reason. Later, later. There'd be time, the evening far away. She stopped, smoking her cigarette, and let the room move.

It grew nice. The color blue and the wall became inseparable. A blue element, blue being. Blue space, supple and alive, her own. The bureau sat, the wardrobe leaned against it, in belonging. But only now, only as long as she wanted it so. They too were hers, belonged to her, really. You see they'll be all right, I know. Her table and chairs, flaking green paint, stood goat-like amidst the garbage.

They deserved better. She took a chair and stood it on the table. A fresh coat of color. White walls, all white, so table and chairs must be black. She'd bought black, she'd worked it all out last night. Curtains a nice yellow. She took a brush and opened a small pot of paint. Then she found her radio and put it on top of the wardrobe. Dave said something about resonance and wood. He had a hi-fi. She found music. Then as she began painting, a man came on with the news. Twelve-thirty. No, she wanted no news, no bulletins. No talking, no temperature, no time. Music. She changed to FM and found a jazz station.

Really, she should eat. The seat and the legs were finished now, at least the first coat. A nice dull black. Coal and earth. They made you hungry, with the smell of the paint so fresh. She went to the refrigerator.

Of course, stupid. New, not even plugged in, nothing. How Dave would laugh. "Of course," he'd say, only that, but mean stupid. Did he love her? Would he love her, ever? She hated him at times because of that. That stupid. But now she'd show him, in the new place.

The bathroom. The first thing to finish.

The Ajax was waiting, the sponge nearly dry. Nice clean wall. In the mirror her face looked large, her eyes unsteady. What next. Finish the walls, the washbasin. The seat. Suddenly she wanted to use it, but clean first, bare wood was better. She started on the

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enameled china, on the white. That was fast, and it came up shining inside and out, but it was cold and the water flowing and she couldn't stand waiting any longer, she had to let herself down on the bowl without the seat. Cold, ice-cold, she winced.

Then she brought the scraper and started on the paintwork. Stubborn. Stubborn, God, this would never be finished. But it had to be, something had to be finished. Sweep, clean sweep, no. One tough thing after another, stubborn, slowly, but she had to show him.

Smoke. Break it again. Break it him them again, stubborn, clean-cut, serried, stubborn, a few grains break them again.

Easier now, much easier, Nancy blew out the smoke. The paint and the wood a pattern. Why finish, finish and kill. Bare wood bare. Finish and kill dead.

The walls too. Clean in places rather, in dabs. Shapes. Living, unique, shapes of their own, of themselves, alive. Lives of their own, alive in shapes she and they wanted at that moment, only then. Lions' paws, eyes, faces, pulsing bodies, states of mind. Eyes faces bodies states of mind growing living into each other.

Suddenly she was full of strength and will. Yes, do. Not finish, but do, make, bring to life. Not clean, but love and possess and inform.

The walls first, then the tiles on the floor. Shapes. Paint too, perhaps, later. Shapes and colors, not just beige. Nor the hexagonal black and white down there, unbroken. The basin white, yes, but perhaps somewhere else. Or maybe not, too much work, pipes, hard and cold, she wanted nothing hard and cold to think of. Leave there, and the toilet too. But in the rooms everything her own, everything mobile.

The front first. The lamps. One in the middle, squatting in the middle, pointed up the left wall and the ceiling. The others somewhere else, no matter now. A suitcase by the wall, jutting out. One to sit on, near the window. Covered with a rug. Open the bundle, let them out. Yes, color color color. The wardrobe, radio on top, away from the walls. Put midway inside the doorless frame, so you have to walk around it coming in. Then see the lamp. The armchair to its right. Listen, listen to music, resonance in wood, sit down facing the wall, nothing else, and hear. Then the bureau, behind the chair to the right, toward the window and the corner, a rug

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thrown over the top. In the far left corner two chairs and the case.

The table? It wouldn't fit now. There was no place, proper place, for it and the other two chairs. And a few more things. But they could go in the kitchen. Or the bedroom. Why not, who said they couldn't, just because nobody kept them in there? Laws gave way. They would to her.

She was breathing fast after the exertion. Water. Cold water, ice. She found a jug in the sink and washed it. The refrigerator wasn't on, she untied the cord and plugged it in. Then she filled the jug and drank and filled it again, and put it on the wire shelf, the freezer purring. Wash up, maybe? No, it was too much.

The wardrobe blocked her vision on the way back. A mystery. She had to walk around it, then she was in the room. There and nowhere else, in one particular room, her own, no other like it, alive because unique and hers the way she'd made it. The table still there, and the chair on top, and the other superfluous things, but only for the moment. She knew their place and they knew it too, and stood there waiting.

Nancy sat down. Listen. The wall bare, blue edge to space. Music all round. Afloat in the room and the music, herself. Listen, listen. Sometimes a man's voice, talking. A name, a title, an instrumentalist, a band. Then five o'clock the man said.

Five. Dave would be there at seven. He wouldn't like it. He wouldn't wait and try, he just wouldn't like it. But he'd have to. This was her. Why show him, show him what? Why show him anything else than herself, what she was. Why change? Change him. Turn him on. Break it, only a few grains break him, nice clean-cut young man stubborn and supreme. Bring him to life. Herself.

But he wouldn't. He wouldn't try. Stubborn, too stubborn, and going his way, and hard. And she loved him. *She* loved what he was, even the hardness she feared. She couldn't break him, nor force him to choose, nor break it. She loved him too much and what he meant. Tonight, going to his friends for dinner. She'd have to dress and she'd dress for him. Hard and stubborn and she'd dress for him.

Five. Past now. And what had she done? Nothing, in his terms. Nor her own, perhaps. They weren't so different, perhaps they weren't so different, perhaps they weren't. God, nothing. Nothing nothing nothing!

Nancy leaped up and began to cry. The narcosis hadn't gone

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and now it unleashed her fear in panic. Dave, please, Dave! She grabbed her jacket. Then she rushed down the stairs.

Now he was coming. "All right. I'll be there," he'd said. He'd been so nice and understood everything, almost as soon as she'd started telling him, almost from the way she'd talked. All right, I'll be there, he said. She could smoke now and wait, he'd be there and and everything would be all right, and he'd like it the way it was, yes, and take care. And he'd bring her food. But she didn't want anything, just float and let the room live, herself. And them too, Dave and her, let them live, come alive. Never mind dinner never mind friends tonight and going somewhere, never mind clean-cut smoke and dressing up, just live. Nothing else.

The buzzer sounded. Nancy rang down, then opened her own door and wandered back to the front room. She curled up in the protection of the armchair, center of her place, herself. Soon she heard Dave climb the last floors and come through the door calling for her. Then, a couple of cardboard boxes in hand, he negotiated the wardrobe and was there. Write-off pullover and jacket, stained jeans, torn canvas shoes. A nice clean-cut young man, hair and nails short, face shaved, now dressed for work. He looked around and looked at her and nodded.

"Hi. It's nice."

It was terrible. The place too, but they could clean that, sheer hard work. But her, sitting there, gone. Much worse than on the phone, worse because in no panic to act, serene now, enjoying it, enveloped in herself. And just when he wanted to tell her. Hopeless.

"What are those for?" she asked.

Dave threw down the boxes. What for yes what for. He'd phoned to say they'd be late coming. Irrelevant now.

"For the shit."

He looked around the room once more, then went to kiss her. Everything in place, her way. Herself the whole room. Only worse, going worse, unchecked. And he'd wanted to talk to her, tell her. But he couldn't now, the way she was, sitting in that room. Yet she was a good girl, and she was beautiful. That's why he had wanted to talk, not just leave and forget about the whole thing, it was such a pity, such waste. But now it would be vicious, worse than a fight. He lifted her out of the chair in his arms.

"How're you feeling?"

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"All right." She snuggled against him. "Better now, I'm fine . . . What do you think?"

A long walk, he'd thought, preparing for a chance, a long walk and tell her, gently. Somebody should have done it long ago, someone who cared enough. Or perhaps they had and got nowhere. Perhaps she'd run each time, thinking they'd meant that, go. Or thinking they wanted to change her, mold her, as if she weren't good enough. But you had to, or just leave, always. You had to change and mold, there was no perfection, not if you really cared. Gently, a long long walk and time, and tell her, he kept preparing for a chance. And now this.

"It's not so bad, really."

"You always say that," she laughed. "I knew you'd say that."

Say, always say, not talk. Let it pass. Then she got the new place, and he waited. New place, a new break. She'd have to think. And they'd have two whole days together, doing it, he could tell her, and she wouldn't run. She'd listen, in the new place, that's when people listened. Gently, and then she'd try and not run.

"It's nice. Needs work, but it'll be all right," he said.

All right, all right again, say all right. Let it pass. But he mustn't, he couldn't deep down, it was only a question of time, and then it would be worse.

"Not now," she laughed again. "It's so stubborn."

"It has to be some time." That was her trouble, running. She worked to eat, but that was all. The rest, running. Always, from all directions. But he mustn't run, and let it pass, he wasn't that kind. He mustn't let go. It would always be stubborn, it was all tough and stubborn, and getting worse.

"Not now," she said. "I couldn't try now."

Maybe not. But tomorrow. He could, just this evening, run with her. Then two whole days together, slowly, gently. Fresh foothold, tomorrow. Unspoiled day and time ahead, she'd be different, and not panic, and try.

"That's right, why don't we just forget about it," he said. "You come to my place, take a few things. Have a shower, change, relax, then we go to eat with them. Then tomorrow we get here early in the morning, and do the whole thing."

Nancy disengaged herself and sat back in the chair.

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"So you don't like it," she said. "You don't like my place."

"I do, I told you. But it's not worth starting tonight. We're going out."

"Why don't we just stay then, if you like it. I can't think now. I don't want to go anywhere. Just stay."

"But over the phone you asked me to come because it was late and . . ." Dave stopped. No, she'd only be afraid. He stepped near and put his hand on the girl's nape, stroking it. He couldn't take her anywhere, not even home. Let her run tonight, run with her, let it be her night, stay.

"The first evening in my place," she said. "Just sit down, and eat, and listen to music, and talk. Paint the chairs maybe. And sleep here. In my new place."

"All right."

Nancy hugged him around the waist. Tonight, tonight she'd try and he'd try, and then he'd know. Just a few grains. Love.

"But we must do some things," he added. He couldn't just sit there, in that place her way, and eat. Or even talk. Simply couldn't. His stomach would turn. "So we can sleep, I mean. And get food. We can't eat without food, you know," she heard him from above.

"I don't want anything. I can't work now, I can't think."

"Don't worry. You just stay there. Listen to music. Sleep. I have a few things to do, it won't take long, then I'll join you."

He stepped away from her and threw his jacket on a chair. Then he took the boxes. "All right?"

"Yes. All right." She smiled. Let him, why not, a few things will make him happy, let him think and work and get somewhere. Then they could try. There was time and she loved him. She had time, a whole evening, a whole night, more perhaps, she could try.

Dave had thrown down the boxes and was pushing the wardrobe into a corner. "It's in the way," he explained.

"I put it there," Nancy said. "I like it in the middle, it's like a door and yet not a door."

"Yes. And you can also walk into it at night."

"You're always thinking," she laughed.

"That's what it's all about," he laughed too, and went into the bedroom.

Soon he reappeared with a chair. Then another. Then shoved

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in a dresser. Then books. Then a stool. Then towels. He held them up to her. She made a face and he threw them in a box. Then he brought in a mattress.

"What are you doing with that?"

He stood it up lengthwise against the wall facing her.

"I have to get everything out so I can start," he said.

"But the dirt will go on it when we do this room."

"It won't. The bedroom will be finished, and then we'll shove everything in there and do this one. Then cover it when we paint and maybe wash the floors at the end."

"You're so methodical."

Dave shrugged his shoulders and laughed. He went back and brought in the bed, standing it next to the mattress, its burlap toward her, the legs sticking out.

"Looks horrible," she said.

"You never see it."

He brought a lamp. Then armfuls of garbage and broken hangers and old clothes. Into the box. He'd got going. Tearing up the place, sorting it out. making fast decisions, inexorably. Working, growing oblivious almost. Stubborn. Stubborn against stubborn. It gave her a headache to watch. The bed and the mattress covered her wall. Only a streak of blue.

"Can't you stop?" she shouted to him.

"Not now. It won't be long."

"But just a little. For tonight. And sit down."

"And smoke and drop out?"

She shuddered. He was ahead of her, had found her out. But he didn't sound hostile, just firm. His firm self, working self. It was gaining hold of him now, getting somewhere.

"Maybe," she ventured. "You could try it. Just once. You'd like it, you've never really tried."

"Not tonight."

"Why not tonight? The first evening, the first time in my place."

He stopped whatever he was doing. She could almost see him take breath and set his head at an angle.

"We can't all drop out," he said. "How would we eat and sleep? If we all dropped out, we'd all be dead."

That was suddenly too much. To be expected somehow, yet

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too sure, too close, too final. And she'd wanted to try tonight, she'd been hoping and he'd stayed. But now he was getting lost in work.

"O drop dead," she sighed.

"I'll just do this room first."

His tone was even. She hadn't wanted to say that, no, and yet it slipped out, and loud enough for him to hear. And just this room, he said. She couldn't sway him, no, tonight or ever. Did she mean that, could she have meant drop dead?

He pressed on. Nancy couldn't hear the music, though she'd turned it up, there was the sound of breaking and sweeping and movement. Even if he paused, she heard it. Getting somewhere. It took longer, was much more than she'd thought it would be, and yes once he'd started there was no way of stopping him, of saying come on sit down and smoke and let's break it. He brought in a picture, wanted to throw it away, then left it for her to decide. Some terrible oil, autumn in the woods. Yet it made her hungry. But she wouldn't tell him, it would be giving in, admitting appetite and want and urge, as stubborn as him. The thought that she couldn't stop it, nor stop him, depressed her. She took another cigarette. Aggressive firm roll, serried both ends. Clean-cut. Break it, break him open? No, he wouldn't try, not a chance, she hadn't a chance.

Dave appeared with some blankets.

"I'll take these down to the cleaners. There's a coin place on the corner, they'll do it straight away. And I'll have to phone too and tell them we're not coming."

"Don't go anywhere. Just stop."

"But they stink. They may have lice too. We can't sleep in them."

Nancy shivered.

"I"ll be back in ten minutes."

He was. He'd taken down a box of garbage too, and now brought up a new box, even larger. And food. Ham and cheese and black bread and tomatoes and onions and butter and fruit juice and beer and tins and salt. He was unpacking it in the kitchen.

"Do you want some?" he called to Nancy. "A sandwich?"

"No. I'm nauseous."

"Because you sit there. Try moving, doing something, it might help. Like wash up."

Dave had worked fast and run down and up the stairs and

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explained for her on the phone and grabbed things quickly in the shop, and he was getting hot.

"Go to hell," she said. "With your logic." His working self, logic. Unbreakable. That was all he was.

He made no reply. The refrigerator was the only clean place, so he put everything in there, the salt and the bread and the tins too. Then he got on with the room. Soon it was empty and he was preparing to clean it.

He'd piled the furniture into the other room, surrounding Nancy. It filled her space, her blue space. The bed and the mattress against the wall, the rest all around. Shutting her in, hostile and foreign, not her own. He'd put them there, and she couldn't stop him. She'd never be able to stop him, working, breaking her blue space with logic. That was all he was, thinking at work. O drop dead.

He'd found the bucket, and filled it with hot water, and squirted in some of the topjob thing.

"Leave it," she said.

"Just the floor, lightly, so we can put things back, then I'll be with you."

"I mean leave it." Her voice sank. "Drop it. Go home. Go eat with them. Go somewhere, you're going somewhere, that's what you are."

"What's the matter?"

"I can't stand you. You think too much, all the time. And you're so sure, you're deadly. And you'll never try anything, because you know, you just know."

"Stop that, Nancy. You wanted us to sit and talk, not fight. Just wait a little and I'll be with you."

"With me, you'll never be with me, not my way. You've ruined the whole thing. That's all you can do. Think and destroy it. I hate you."

Dave bent down for the bucket. But he couldn't ignore her. She was running now, running from him, and even before he'd told her, running from just what he was. Tensed up with her smoke to hysterics, everything much larger, more sudden. He had to tell her, and stay firm, or she'd just run, back into herself, the one direction she knew, and no way to reach her.

"Nancy, you phoned me because you wanted help so we can

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go out, because you'd made a mess of it. Because you couldn't think. So I came and helped and put up with the things you said because you're in this state. But now I'm beginning to have enough. It's what . . ."

"And so am I!" she shouted. "I've had enough of it all the time. I just realize I can't stand people who think clearly, who are going somewhere."

"I don't believe you. You don't believe that yourself. It's not how you've been talking and acting these last five weeks at all, it's just stupid."

"Like I am. I know you think I'm stupid. Well, I am, for you. And you for me. Empty and hard. You seem nice, but really you're just logic. That's all, logic. No more to you, inside you're dead. Just going somewhere. So go."

Dave stepped nearer, but she leaned back away from him in the chair, and he halted.

"You're raving," he said.

"So what do you care? You don't care at all!"

"I was just going to say that I do. Very much. And I've wanted to talk to you for a long time because I care, because I love you. But you're going to pieces and if you go on, you'll lose me and everyone after me. You're running, giving up, when anything gets difficult, when it really begins to want you. So all you have to look back on is defeat, and that gives you even less courage next time. And then suddenly there'll be no time left, and there'll be nothing left of you either. You won't be a good person and you won't be beautiful. You'll just sit there."

"I like sitting there! It's my place the way I want it. And you don't love me, you just want to change me. That's what you love, working on me, getting somewhere. You don't know what love is. If you did, you'd take me just as I am."

"That's not what love is for me. That's just a crush."

"You see what I mean? So go, just go."

Dave stood still, looking at her. Long long walk. But she couldn't be right, it would be impossible, much worse next time. Overwrought and hysterical now, but that too was her, it was in her.

"Go on," she said. "Go to your somewhere."

Dave went to the bed leaning against the wall, and took it to the other room.

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"What's that?" Nancy asked.

"I'm going. I just don't want you to bring it down over your head." Then he carried out the mattress and came back and stopped, once more away from her.

"You'll have to try, Nancy. For your own sake. And you can only try alone, it seems."

"What for?" She sounded calmer now, more self-possessed, the worst he feared for her. "It's not my way. I've just realized. Clear thinking. I hate it."

"That's not true, you're just saying it now. And there's been much more these last five weeks than just thinking, and you enjoyed it. You're not so far, you're just going. You can stop."

"I like going," she laughed, tossing her face up. "It's my way. That's why you've never really made any difference to me, from the start. And because you're always thinking. That's all you are. You could have hit me, if you really cared, but all you do is think. And I can't stand that, I can't stand you. I just realized I never could."

Dave nodded, then his head stopped at an angle. He pointed into the bedroom.

"Maybe you're right. I even put your bed in the corner, the *logical* place. So tonight you can hate me for that while you sleep, in the only clean room you have. And hate it when you wake up, tomorrow, if you still can."

Then he took his jacket.

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Alan Friedman

THE OTHER LAWRENCE

With a writer as unsettling as Lawrence, it's best to start with the worst. His repetitions, his tone-deaf prose, his hysterical vagueness, the amateur sexual comings and goings-on, the rhetoric of prophecy and the theology of fascism, all that irrational mystical bombast he foisted on the novel — a fog — murk between the reader and his experience of fiction. So I once thought. And Lawrence's clamorous fans I cynically imagined I understood: sexual politics had distorted the judgment of otherwise intelligent people. Things look different to me now. Lawrence is getting better all the time. It's taken time and it's clear why. I had been exhorted by the tradition of the English novel which culminates in F. R. Leavis to look in the novel for what the novel can give. This is still a delimiting expectation and an honorable aesthetic. But I have learned to look for more. I've come to expect, perhaps to demand, and sometimes I think to crave for what the novel as a kind of prose narrative cannot reasonably be expected to give readers. And I've come to understand — each time I venture into Lawrence again it's the same story of my impatience followed by my reluctant rediscovery — that where I was once disturbed by the roughness of the writing (I still am), I am now also disturbed, and *in the same passages,* by the kind of illumination that goes beyond what the art of the novel, aspects of the novel, the rise of the novel, the great tradition of the novel, the craft of fiction, the rhetoric of fiction and the forms of fiction, together or singly, can provide.

"They haunted the back of the common day," he wrote in a striking line from *The Rainbow.* The phrase locates his fiction for us. The great tradition of the English novel haunts the front of the

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common day. The solid succession is about morals, manners, money and marriage. And D. H. Lawrence's books are indeed substantial in this vein. *Women in Love* is about Ursula's marriage, Gudrun's morals, Gerald's money and Hermione's manners. But the fifth character, the impossible one by the name of Rupert Birkin, he's there in the book for a fifth *m,* the *m* Lawrence added to the English novel — mystery, or mysticism, or messiness if you happen to find Birkin's transcendency a mess.

> Quenched, inhuman, his fingers upon her unrevealed nudity were the fingers of silence upon silence, the body of mysterious night upon the body of mysterious night, the night masculine and feminine, never to be seen with the eye, or known with the mind, only known as a palpable revelation of mystic otherness.

Not seen with the eye (Defoe to Conrad); not known with the mind (Fielding to Joyce); out of the world, out of the novel. For the passage (like the work from which it comes, *Women in Love*) goes on and on to "the mystic body of reality" and then on to "the immemorial magnificence of mystic, palpable, real otherness." And so there remains, troubling our minds, the cogent question of whether the novel in general, as a genre of narrative devoted to the presentation of this world, can tolerate any other world — whether or not any other exists.

Can we agree that since Lawrence's time at any rate the latter question has been settled? Can we agree that there are, as he had to insist, two interlocking realities, the common daylight of consciousness and the haunting darkness of the unconscious, the latter still extremely mysterious? Or if we should wish to quibble, there may well be only one reality with a startling inequality and discontinuity in modes: daylight shading off at its limits into a greater darkness. For the purposes of discussing character in the novel then, there may well be two regions of the self, the one we come to recognize and the other self — prior, in some sense not the same self at all, unrecognizable, in which "one lives, knows, and has one's being" without much reference to the conscious mind and the daylight self. That prior self, or as I shall call it for convenience in discussing Lawrence's fiction, the Underself, is at least as important as, and more intimate than, the second. It is "one half of life, belonging to the

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darkness." (Further discussion here of this vast antinomy — consciousness of one's unconsciousness — in our lives rather than our novels, would be out of place. But I predicate the distinction of selves in both fiction and reality. For those who remain unconvinced, for those who assert the nonexistence of any "other" self, the experience of reading Lawrence must be uniquely unpleasant, like drifting accidentally into somebody else's bad dream.)

It is evident that the special energy of modern fiction derives from its treatment of the self. Focusing microscopically on the psyche and its nuances, James, Lawrence, Joyce — the three great masters — each modified the novel's resources for its display. By technical means, each expanded the resources for portraying character that had dominated nineteenth-century fiction. But while we know a great deal about the new methods of James and the new methods of Joyce, we have not yet come to terms with Lawrence's. What I want to point out here is that what Lawrence essentially contributed to the novel was a methodical quest. With method, he changed not this or that in fiction; he changed fiction. He made the novel give more than it *could* give, that is to say he made it transcend the generic conditions of its form by pushing it down, out of character and out of this world. There was madness in that. And Lawrence's madness, rather than his method, continues to characterize and continues to redeem the modern novel. Earlier than Joyce, Proust, Gide, Kafka and Mann, what Lawrence did to fiction was to initiate in the form of the novel the impossible quest that has become its binding, underlying condition: inexhaustible precisely because it is a lust after the impossible notation, the bottomless subbasement.

Now it is a truism that Lawrence and Joyce, however wildly at variance from each other, together form the English vanguard of the fiction we call modern. But while everyone who can read Joyce can understand what Joyce *did* to the novel — like it or not — Lawrence's important innovations — perhaps because they are by now far more standard, more influential and pervasive throughout modern fiction — still have to be pointed out. The no-holds-barred spontaneity of the author's personal involvement in his own novel; the crucial framework of symbolic scenes overshadowing his plot; the explicit tying-in of the degree of his characters' sexual fulfillment with virtually everything else in the novel: each of these

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is characteristically modern, each partly a matter of attitudes, partly a matter of technique. But the basic change Lawrence made in fiction was still more far-reaching than any of these: it included them all and made their successful deployment possible.

> He was seeking for the unknown sources of the mysterious stream of consciousness. . . . Whence did it come, and whither was it bound?

Lawrence wrote that, but as a matter of fact it is neither about himself nor about Joyce, but about Freud. And yet this specific search — and no less — was Lawrence's own too, not only in such often cranky essays as *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (from which the quotation comes), but in his fiction. That is, while Lawrence's novels happen not to employ the particular technique we have learned to call the stream of consciousness, they do indeed trace, map and present the springs from which the stream rises — its "unknown sources." And from this energetic pursuit of the sources of the "mysterious" stream of consciousness, all of Lawrence's fiction flows. This is as true of *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* where the stream takes a turn —

> The quiver was going through the man's body, as the stream of consciousness again changed direction, turning downwards. And he was helpless, as the penis in slow soft undulations filled and surged and rose up, and grew hard, standing there hard and overweening, in its curious towering fashion. The woman too trembled a little as she watched.
>
> "There! Take him then! He's thine," said the man.
>
> And she quivered, and her own mind melted out.

— as it is of *Sons and Lovers,* where the stream wobbles between Nottingham and Vienna —

> Suddenly a piece of paper started near his feet and blew along down the pavement. He stood still, rigid, with clenched fists, a flame of agony going over him. And he saw again the sick-room, his mother, her eyes. Unconsciously, he had been with her, in her

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> company. The swift hop of the paper reminded him she was gone. But he had been with her. He wanted everything to stand still, so that he could be with her again.

Searching high and low, his novels, unlike the essays, search long and well.

And it is here, at the parallels with Freudian analysis, that I wish to pause. Everywhere in the novels they suggest themselves irresistibly and should be resisted. Moving on parallel lines, perhaps Lawrence and Freud will meet at infinity. Meanwhile, I pause to note that the shape of things Lawrence finds in the regions below consciousness —

> . . . the darkness wheeled round about, with grey shadow-shapes of wild beasts, and also with dark shadow-shapes of the angels . . .

— have heavenly differences from the shapes Freud is disposed to find: "shadow-shapes of the angels" do not wheel for Freud's unconscious. Lawrence's point in the passage above from *The Rainbow* is just that, and in *Fantasia of the Unconscious,* he spelled it out specifically: "What Freud says is always *partly* true." While Lawrence's unconscious therefore — that is, the dimension of the fictional Underself he creates — includes many of the things we might expect to find in Freud's unconscious, it includes a great many things besides: "a powerful wave of mounting blood" and "the strange and moonlike intensity of the hypogastric plexus and the sacral ganglion." But more interesting than the differences between the novelist and the psychologist is the difference between Lawrence as novelist and Lawrence as psychologist. His friendliest critics have long been at pains to confess that the slow shuttling of passions back and forth in *Sons and Lovers* among Paul Morel, his mother and his two young women produces an explicit psychological context that is not satisfactorily presented in psychological terms — despite the author's lengthy expository efforts — and yet is perfectly generated by nonrational vision and by physical details. The author's method is naturalistic; his eye painterly; his intent psychological. But beneath this conventionally crowded human surface his novel has another life. The reader is taken along on an expedition (non-Freudian in *Sons and Lovers,* later anti-Freudian) hunting for a map of the

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human psyche which shall be other than human, at once less and more than human — extrahuman. And the search is maintained at such a pressure that its power becomes almost that of a natural force. Moonlight and coaldust, the wind in the ash tree, the drop of mother's blood that falls on a baby's hair, William's coffin and Paul's pneumonia, the plucking of flowers, the dancing of a "big red beast" of a stallion, the "blind and ruthless" hot blood-bath of sex — for Lawrence these are not merely embodiments and vehicles of meaning. They are the terms of a fate that drives his people and his plot — physical terms, finally, rather than psychological terms — a startling attitude toward the human psyche which, by the time he came to write *The Rainbow* he made fully explicit.

In a celebrated letter to his editor, Edward Garnett, Lawrence explained provocatively that in creating character in fiction, what now fascinated him was a part of the human self that was "non-human" — "that which is physic" — a region of the psyche which functioned apart from the moral, consistent, stable, individual ego, a level of character at which "the individual is unrecognizable." To put the matter recognizably, before James Joyce and by a different method, after Freud but by a different avenue, Lawrence attempted a direct literary rendering of his characters' unconscious. From the first character on the first page of *The Rainbow* who is "aware of something standing above him and beyond him in the distance," to Ursula and her communion with a rainbow on the last page, the inner, unknown reality of the Underself becomes for Lawrence a technical quest. And the quest proceeds physically: a physical base for the unconscious.

It should be evident that when I speak of mapping and tracing the regions below consciousness, I am speaking of a literary rendering, not of a usable theoretical construct which can be separated from the fiction. The problem of course is that Lawrence fancied himself a doctor of the mind. And in the old days a large part of the interest his fans took in his fiction was generated by his theorizing — a rhetoric of novel notions that flooded out over the notional novels into essays, tracts and utopian schemes. However annoying his stance in some of these programmatic statements, still, it is worth noticing that beneath every verdict and sneer, beneath even his offensive and impractical politics, lay his theory of the psyche.

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> The self which rises naked every morning out of the dark sleep of the passionate, hoarsely-calling blood: this is the unit for the next society.

And beneath *that,* as beneath the novels, lay his obstinate grasp of an antecedent dimension of the self, a self "out of mind and sight and speech." His obstinacy led to the absurdities of the essays:

> Make [your wife] yield to her own real unconscious self, and absolutely stamp on the self that she's got in her head. Drive her forcibly back, back into her own true unconscious [;]

his grasp to the eccentricities of the fiction:

> He knew what it was to have the strange and magical current of force in his back and loins, and down in his legs, force so perfect that it stayed him immobile, and left his face subtly, mindlessly smiling.

Like the irritating opacities of all later novelists who reach into the well of the unconscious, the eccentricities in Lawrence's novels arise from the inevitable conflict between his grasp of his subject and the nature of narrative. He patiently dredges up for us as much of his familiar darkness as he can irradiate by a medium — the web of words — of all media the most inappropriate to that subject. The nearly insuperable problem is verbalization; the Underself is subverbal. In fiction (the good old saw buzzes), show, don't tell. But how do you show the invisible? How do you say the unsayable?

Perhaps you don't try. The unsayable is stylistically embarrassing. Literary embarrassment is a species of inhibition and discomfort at the exhibition of bad taste; good taste, by its discomfort, excludes the direct expression of what Lawrence sought to render directly. Lawrence's detractors fall into the two classes of those who object to the style of his attempts and those who think he was out of his head. Perhaps like me you've heard the story (I don't vouch for its accuracy) of the lady back in the days of crystal radio sets who complained that she kept hearing in her head the programs of a local station, coming in through a loose tooth. The noise in her jaw, she said, bothered her, no one believed her, she was considered a crank,

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she sued the station, she won. It happened to be true that her tooth was acting as a crystal receiving set. The second class of Lawrence's skeptics would not have believed her. Who could? ("Open your mouth and say, *'WABC.'* ")

But the proof lies in the maw of Lawrence's fiction, and his achievement there is nothing less than an unlikely success of technique.

Readers acquainted with Joyce's brilliant solution to the problem — *distorting* conventional verbalization in order to render preconscious and unconscious material — tend to misread Lawrence. When Lawrence distorts, as he does, it is also because he proposes to move beneath consciousness. But in order to take us elsewhere, into his own particular and very different region of the unconscious, he distorts not words and not grammar, but the conventional signals for emotions. All those wild passages in Lawrence —

> Terribly, shocks ran over her body, like shocks of electricity, as if many volts of electricity suddenly struck her down

— are not exaggerated metaphors for unlikely feelings. They are correlatives (subjective ones) for the invisible and unsayable processes of the unconscious. One may continue to misread them as metaphors for conscious emotion. And if read that way, these crucial physical passages in Lawrence will seem bizarre. Yet a careful reading will provide little excuse for this. Later, in *Women in Love,* he was to refer with paradoxical explicitness to "that other basic mind, the deepest physical mind." But even in *The Rainbow* his distinction was clearly made("in reality each one was a dark, blind, eager wave"), and his technique for rendering separately the two orders of the self was already coherent and illuminating. In each of the three generations he treats in *The Rainbow,* he maneuvers beneath consciousness through consistently heightened distortions of physical sensation. The entire significance of very extended narrative passages condenses on moments that transcend (downward) the confining muddle of daylight feeling and consciousness and carry us to another domain of psychic life, a physical and impersonal Underself. In the first generation, that of the grandparents —

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> And he remained himself, he saved himself from crashing down into nothingness, from being squandered into fragments, by sheer tension, sheer backward resistance

— in the second, that of the parents —

> The strangeness, the power of her in her dancing consumed him, he was burned, he could not grasp, he could not understand. He waited obliterated

— and in the third, that of the contemporaries —

> He was afraid of the great moon-conflagration of the cornstalks rising above him. His heart grew smaller, and it began to fuse like a bead. He knew he would die.

In each generation these moments are physical, demonic, visionary and impersonal.

Now since the very texture of the traditional novel, in nearly every paragraph on every page, consists of the display of the self, the crossplay among individual selves and the interplay between the personal self and the objective social world, it follows that to refuse to focus on the personal self is to tear right through the texture of the novel and perhaps even to change its reason for being. The simple fact is that after *Sons and Lovers,* although Lawrence's novels are still located in recognizable rooms, fields, restaurants and mountain slopes, they take place elsewhere. Until that location is understood, nothing in Lawrence makes very satisfactory sense. Take as a small example: "She looked at him. . . . She shrank a little, as if she were exposed to his eyes, and as if it were a pain to her." Now the text makes it clear that as a matter of fact Birkin *is looking* at Ursula. So it is evidently nonsense to say that she shrank "as if" she were exposed to his eyes. But in fact the "she" that is "as if" exposed to Birkin's eyes here, is not the grammatical she of discourse nor the conventional self of the novel. It is Ursula's Underself which she senses has been exposed to Birkin's eyes, and which exposure she shrinks from. This is the self Lawrence is talking about, virtually always. And once the reader can make that shift (a shift in terms and in meaning upon which Lawrence is tirelessly explicit), virtually

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everything in his fiction immediately becomes clear, precise, apt, deft and readable. For instance: "She was perfectly stable in resistance when she was in this state: so bright and radiant and attractive in her pure opposition. . . ." ". . . [t]he father seemed to breathe an air of death, as if he were destroyed in his very being. . . ." "They continued radiant in their easy female transcendancy, beautiful to look at." All of these, from a single page in *Women in Love,* make perfect prose and perfect sense. The style is a triumph of rhythm and diction adjusted to the subject — provided one understands what the subject *is.* If one misunderstands, or the moment one forgets, everything alters to the clumsiest jargon of pretentious abstraction. Any writer who describes the self, the daily self of the daylight world, as a girl perfectly stable in resistance, a man destroyed in his very being, and two sisters radiant in easy female transcendancy, will get short shrift from me. As transcriptions of the Underself, however, as an attempt to articulate the movements of something by its nature inarticulate and unarticulable, Lawrence's writing is on the whole elegant. Referred to the Underself and not to the self, passages that might otherwise repel grow suddenly luminous and right:

> There was a queer, faint, obscene smile over his face. She looked at him and saw him, and knew that he was initiate as she was initiate. This thwarted her, and contravened her, for the moment.

And writing which runs roughshod over idiomatic English takes on surprising impact. (There may be less surprise if we consider again the opposed, limiting case of Joyce's practice. Just as in Joyce elliptical syntax and the pulverization of words together form a single technique, so in Lawrence hyperbolic awareness and the fracturing of idiom form a single technique for conveying unconscious material.) Keeping the Underself in mind, consider for exampie the passage in which Gerald pulls off his muddy boots and climbs into Gudrun's bed. "His pure body was almost killed" is not bad writing, though it is remarkably unidiomatic. "But the miraculous, soft effluence of her breast suffused over him" is not hoarse jargon, though it shows the invisible visibly. "His brain was hurt, seared, the tissue was as if destroyed" is not shrill exaggeration of Gerald's condition: all three are analogues, subjective correlatives for an unconscious condition of being.

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For what, for which unconscious conditions? — the question is tempting; but it had better not (since it cannot) be answered. What Lawrence "means" by speaking of the "soft effluence of her breast" should — if Lawrence is right and his method justified — remain unavailable to consciousness, unsayable in the categories of awareness in any direct way. This is frustrating. But by obvious definition, the unconscious content conveyed by the subjective correlatives is inexpressible except by way of other correlatives. And if the relative passages in Lawrence are valid, they ought to evoke, as I think they do, a correlative response in the reader, which should remain nevertheless somewhere beneath graspable consciousness in himself. To evoke such unconscious responses in the Underself of the reader is often Lawrence's strategy, as in this picture (from *The Rainbow*) of harvesting as a kind of rhythmic lovemaking:

> Ever with increasing closeness he lifted the sheaves and swung striding to the centre with them, ever he drove her more nearly to the meeting, ever he did his share, and drew towards her, overtaking her. There was only the moving to and fro in the moonlight, engrossed, the swinging in the silence, that was marked only by the splash of sheaves, and silence, and the splash of sheaves. And ever the splash of his sheaves broke swifter, beating up to hers, and ever the splash of her sheaves recurred monotonously, unchanging, and ever the splash of his sheaves beat nearer.
>
> Till at last, they met at the shock, facing each other, sheaves in hand.

The same rhythm in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* works relentlessly to generate in the reader his own unconscious responses to sexual intercourse:

> And it seemed she was like the sea, nothing but dark waves rising and heaving, heaving with a great swell, so that slowly her whole darkness was in motion, and she was ocean rolling its dark, dumb mass. Oh, and far down inside her the deeps parted and rolled asunder, in long, far-travelling billows, and ever, at the quick of her, the depths parted and rolled asunder, from the center of soft plunging, as the plunger went deeper and deeper, touching lower, and she was deeper and deeper and deeper disclosed, and heavier the billows of her rolled away to some shore, uncovering her, and

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> closer and closer plunged the palpable unknown, and further and further rolled the waves of herself away from herself, leaving her, till suddenly, in a soft, shuddering convulsion the quick of all her plasm was touched, she knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman.

And the repetitions in the following passage — the private ritual of Anna's dancing, big with child and naked, upon whose privacy her husband accidentally intrudes — have the same hypnotic function:

> And she lifted her hands and danced again, to annul him, the light glanced on her knees as she made her slow, fine movements down the far side of the room, across the firelight. He stood away near the door in blackness of shadow, watching, transfixed. And with slow, heavy movements she swayed backwards and forwards, like a full ear of corn, pale in the dusky afternoon, threading before the firelight, dancing his non-existence, dancing herself to the Lord, to exultation.

How wonderful to remember that this passage, with its mysterious religious suggestiveness, was one of those that aroused judicial impatience and led to the banning of the book in 1915. The accuracy of the censors is worth noticing: without knowing it, looking for obscenity, they found the essential Lawrence. For he was surely correct in asserting that sex is the port of entry into the unconscious mystery. And it was perfectly just too that Joyce's experiment with other regions of the great continents below consciousness should also have brought him directly into conflict with the censors on the same issue of sexual obscenity. For both writers, freedom to travel in the hinterlands of consciousness involved the right-of-entry into the port.

Lawrence's technique, however, is more than a matter of diction, rhythm, location and focus. He composes his scenes with a fluent and uncanny narrative movement that is worth examination in detail. Passages which suggest the upward rush of unconscious perception into consciousness often occur in separate paragraphs, or in sentences which stand out, identifiably "different" in their contexts. But many of the processes occurring below the threshold of

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awareness, perhaps the majority, are worked subtly and unobtrusively into the text. The result, in Lawrence's style, is a shifting, in-and-out strategy, a technical legerdemain. In *The Rainbow*, for instance, in the wedding of Anna and Tom in Chapter Five, by a characteristic inward swing, Lawrence takes us one step farther than we are accustomed to go in fiction. We move from an external description of the wedding — all its visible commotion — to a point inside the bride Anna's head ("Anna bent her head and smiled in her veil. How absurd he was! Brangwen was staring away . . ." — to a point inside her father's — Brangwen's — head ("His wife and he! With a pang of anguish he realized what uncertainties they both were."). All this is conventional, but from this point Lawrence takes us further. We are led from the convention in which words stand for awareness (thoughts and feelings: "How absurd he was!. . . . With a pang of anguish . . .") to a new convention in which states of awareness themselves stand for something occurring at a point still further "inside" or underneath. These moments are radically different in kind: "Did one never get old, never die? That was the clue. He exulted strangely, with torture." And, "How rich and splendid his own life was, red and burning and blazing and sporting itself in the dark meshes of his body: and his wife, how she glowed and burned within her meshes!" The reader caught in this pulsating current (out again he moves with Brangwen through the "loud noise of the organ" to the wedding itself) is not apt to be readily able to distinguish the two orders of the self inside Brangwen's head. And indeed it may not be important for him to do so for such passages to work. As critics, nevertheless, readers can and should distinguish; we ought not to misread the most crucial passages in Lawrence and condemn them as lapses in style. What *is* important in any event is to observe that Lawrence's orchestration, these marvelously deceptive sliding effects, like the long rhythmic passages excerpted above, elicit and deliberately engage unconscious response.

It is here that one sees his surprisingly natural kinship with the unformed young, the "far out" and magico-mystical. When Lawrence portrays alterations in consciousness, passages from his novels (taken out of context) sound remarkably like descriptions of tripping out:

> . . . when his eyes met hers, a yellow flash from them caused a darkness to swoon over her consciousness, electric, and a slight

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> strange laugh came on his face. Her eyes would turn languidly, then close, as if hypnotized. And they lapsed into the same potent darkness.

An avant-garde press out west named itself after him; his face looks down from one of those huge posters, along with Bogart, Brando and Belmondo; maybe his books are read, even. For the youngest of our writers who have been exposed to a literary generation older than Allen Ginsberg's, Lawrence figures as a kind of hero. He wrote free verse, he thought freewheel, he lived freestyle; he blessed sex, he fought censorship, he tackled the ethical smugness of the Establishment; he went over to the Indians before *they* did and came near to deifying the redman's way of life and way of worship; he treasured "allotropic states" (as he put it) of the ego. One can easily imagine, nevertheless, how his perverse puritan spirit would have responded to the notion of chemically induced mysticisms, to an entire subculture dialing UHF channels for better reception of the deep unconscious. But he did not have time for reactions, and like it or not, the invisible Underself he struggled to put into print is more and more audibly with us — from John Hawkes to Donald Barthelme, from William Burroughs to the Beatles.

And it should by now be apparent that the problem of Lawrence's style is related to the problem of his "obscenity" and that both in turn are related to his continuing relevance to current writing: to his methodical madness. The carefully cultivated harshness of style of contemporary writers — the exactly unsettling expression, the baffling rejection of polish — is a branch of our modern sensibility that comes right from Lawrence (from Lawrence and Hardy, rather than Joyce and James). That harshness is related to the full, often rough, exploration of sexual relations: to tear through the surface of the fiction to the Underself. We move closer and closer to a special kind of nakedness that may well continue to embarrass us, to a sense of the unmediated man. Our characters wear on their sleeves not so much their hearts as their sexual organs and their puzzling and self-puzzling mysteries.

Lawrence's books went a great journey. Foreshadowing much of modern fiction they moved gradually from an appeal to his readers to direct assault, from lyric poetry to irrational politics, from naturalism to nature myths, from social relations to sexual relations,

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from plot and theme to symbol and dream, from the delineation of character to the excavation of psyche. And if his reputation is higher now than it was several decades back, that is partly because there are now more readers who are less disturbed by stylistic as well as other kinds of embarrassment — who prefer effrontery and confrontation to the success of the safe style presenting the intelligible subject. In this sense Lawrence has been as useful as Joyce in freeing fiction from its agreeable balance of power and its complacent power of balance.

Barnett Newman

1905-1970

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THE TRIAL

by

Jules Feiffer

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Ladder of the sun

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Filippa Rolf

AS IT IS WRITTEN

The paintings were relatively genuine, bought in the 1840s or 50s, before counterfeiting was lucrative for the middlemen: the Ruisdael, a large forest with a rutted road; the Raphael, a standing Mary with the children Jesus and John, a wistful Joseph walking in the distance, looking over his shoulder; the Rubens, the hilarious, true-to-life arrangement of ladies sitting on top of each other, the child Jesus, almost levitated on so many blankets, holding the Lamb, which, in turn, holds the sacrificial banner of suffering.

My family I: Grandmother

My birth as a girl apparently as sturdy as the others, but in a dry way and depending largely on hypnosis for achievement — a terrible, hairraising calamity, wherein cramps and the maddening metallic shivers of — mingled with my mother's teeth-chattering — the copper-shiny doors of the tiled stove in a primitive lying-in hospital played prominent parts — occurred on Nov. 15, 1924, in Rigden, Ankarea. (This is what happens to cities and countries when you emigrate: they become fantasy.) The stove doors made noise because in an effort to relax her tension, the nurses kept abnormal fires going in my mother's room. And shortly after, the maid, a buoyant woman, later on an American — in my imagination she committed suicide — in a baker's or cook's outfit to celebrate the glad event came in with me on her arm and a chief's high white hat on the top of her foolish head for my first meal. The frail and helplessly cold, not quite young woman with light curly hair over a tall forehead suffered from this

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separation multiplied by itself which the presence of certain loved beings may imply: her mother was there with her, invincible, misguiding, the Baroness Stanislas Waar. Rigden is easily the most beautiful city in Europe. It should be seen especially of a winter's morning when a rich blue envelops her leonine buildings; there may be snow in the crevices of her granite rocks, snow on her innumerable waters, snow on her towers. (I have gleaned this information, recently, from Grandmother's correspondence with an older daughter, myopically playing "Rock of Ages" at the upright piano, singing in a tremulous soprano, and Mother's comment on the same when I was home last Christmas.) We were talking, some New Oxford friends and I, about observations and how they may change when different people look at the same thing — how one person based all on two observations, assumed wrongly, and so came out dead center wrong — judging the home by the color of a wallpaper put up by an earlier occupant, for instance; and it occurred to me, giddily, that if you were to send a psychiatrist — not the very best, but one of the run of the mill — to my grandmother's country place in Ankarea he perhaps would have noted that everybody there, in his eyes, moved around in a natural fashion, all except for my mother, who spent rather too much time in bed, reading each day and night a novel, which, to her, dropped from a tree, which is to say it — masterpiece or trash — never related to her experience, nor was asked to do so; never addressing in me my future and corporate self of schooling or effort; and being, herself, the innocent mother of an incontestable, scientific truth: "Servants, townspeople, and educated people seem afraid of death." *Bien entendu,* she would be using the word in a characteristically wide and vague sense, permitting her to join, handlelike, an image of servants fleeing from, and doctors panicking at, deathbeds to an invisible mental blade of loyal application to her everyday surroundings.

Grandmother, Stanislas (Stanny) Waar, née Tersmeden, a Walloon family with its origins in Namur, from where maybe derived her but reluctantly greying dark hair, was a lady of firm volume, and it was customary in her nowadays furtively catty, more or less arrogantly malcontent, humorless and cruel children to comment on her beautiful mouth in moments of birthday rhetoric. She had large hands, a purple hymnal and interesting eyes — I think I may have them and I don't really recall hers but they were interesting the way

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the weather had to be for this woman who was early a widow and ran her estate herself: anyway — the grownups had better keep those eyes in mind; she was wonderful with the smallest of grandchildren but often vulgarly sarcastic and unjust in a heavy way with the rest of the world; yet, she even *cheated at croquet once* when playing her favorite game with us when we were ten-year-old girls.

She had many grandchildren, indeed, and my forced invitation to Arvida, one of my cousins (on her father's side) from Ankarea, to stay with me in New Oxford for as long as her study tour of Eastern colleges might call for had been long ago mailed. The reason for both of us being in this country — she temporarily — had something to do with Socialism. She was sent by the Government, but I didn't know what to do in Ankarea and had fallen back with a cry of recognizing surprise on what I considered old *nineteenth-century habits* here — almost in terms of *protected gentility* reliving my mother's youth, an opportunity which was distasteful to her but insistently interesting to me. And now I stood slightly bent forward by anticipation waiting for the door to her airplane to open and people to come tumbling out. Separated from them by several layers of soiled glass with moist spring air on one side and stale tobacco smoke on the other in the waiting room I witnessed the visual opposite to a cinematic arrival with its knee-to-hatbrim close-up. Namely I saw, in a diminishing and very clear focus, beyond the two rows of ripped chairs out of reach, and even beyond the vaguely reflecting pale ocher floor, beyond the tarmac, my cousin's arm, rather plump and rounded among the others, carrying a suitcase and trying to wave to me. In the next minute I am hugged by all of it in gay distrust and suntan (must be Florida) hat — her gay distrust no doubt is that of a childhood coeval rather than playmate upon meeting her opposite number emigrated to America seventeen years ago, but also wafts something from her "sad, young mother" in her paradise. My cousin from Ankarea tries to communicate her stewardess' directions in view of her luggage to me — "to the immediate left of Exit D" — we were in Exit D with the sign above our heads which remain too obvious to be understood easily.

It has great power over me, the use of the primordial words: the river, the boat, the lime tree. In addition I had been dreaming of our summer home for a month in advance in not quite deep dreams;

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and having Arvida's naïve and astute voice lift and light Grandmother out on the porch step in the surrounding darkness as if the riches out of the hands of a witch luminous lucciola from the grass with far steadier direction longed-for not surprising and leaving its light in the room by two childless women — she married, could not have any; on my part, it was a mistake, inspired by — *but fear* of having my by me unknown looks thrown in my face. When they improved, mercury dropping to a short, pug-faced Garbo, it was too late — who hadn't expected as our parents put it "necessarily to like each other" made me wonder as spinsters will how come we were not gentler. For in the brown light of the bayberry candles after supper over the winestained tablecloth Arvida said the words: "Do you remember Grandmother on the porch step in the light at the end of the driveway when we would come from Trekanten with Edvin at night with laprobes and the bag of rolls?"

I think, by the way, that it is of utmost importance that "Uncle Harald" is dead, his message being from the "beyond," a hint, an experience. Editor's note: — No, he is not dead. Recently, he asked my brother to take over the estate. He seems to have said no. Nonetheless a familiar disguise began to steal, paralysislike, over my features. Since we must believe in messages even when the messenger is an unsympathetic character, I wrote this In Memoriam, moved by a will to rise.

His name was Sigvald Pedersen, and he came from Denmark during the war because his friends and he had blown up a German factory. One of them had been killed to his knowledge, that is, in his presence. He studied Greenland lichens. — Students ate at absolutely dismal socalled "dining-rooms," where you helped yourself from a central table (the scene of many humbly bent backs and stretched bare wrists), spearing thinly sliced cucumber with chopped parsley. He stood at the corner of my table and said: "What is the Ankarean for "minced meat with onion?" Now, the Danish for this sounds grotesquely silly, the Ankarean quite stiff and humorless. He said he liked brown and had been noticing me and following me for some time because I was dressed in brown. At this I had an instant flashback of myself walking next to a tall concave elm hedge in the professorial suburb where I lived, the tips of its myriad-dented, sloping leaves protruding through an imaginary chicken wire fence, some of

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them Naples yellow, some still retaining their green at the edges, the sidewalk a peculiar purple-shaded dark blue asphalt where leaves had come languidly to rest. I had been wearing brown.

Add to this, oh angel of the scales of Justice, that he was uncommonly handsome in an unself-conscious, manly way, and had brown hair. I was on my first term at the University; he was the first boy I had attracted, and in a sense he is the last, and only one, others tending to be repetition: much shorter instances, like quick retakes, ever briefer hints at a theme in the full orchestra of mirage, where "ghosts are playing ghost music," and for this reason of the most extreme moral value. I slid into his company in the most natural way; it was dull; only rarely has life been so dull — and then only in the subdued company of good people. We went for walks along the narrow river winding from town to the lake which, through Rigden, ends in the Eastlake. He knew the names of birds telling me them in Danish, pointing out their owners. We watched them at dawn, from a sedge- and willow-grown islet, alone, take to the air from the grey, turbid waters of the lake. "Like Adam and Eve," he said, of us, steadying my step from a horizontal willow tree among freezing mud and tangled, broken reeds, as we went back to the neighboring township to have breakfast in a restaurant. My mother said Pedersen was a common name. It was close to the one that would have been my father's, "the rough diamond," had he not received a new last name in baptism, I pondered. (At this point Mother, who had a talent for sculpture, was constantly moving the furniture about. I can see her, covering her face with one hand (all these people were equally unwilling to be written about), with unruly eye checking some Italian silks, where she stands, in the clair-obscure of some *imagined* torchlight. The incubus, her sure, hyperopic eye, caused me to trap her once, as an infant, in the presence of some regal and late 17th century, by saying I had the ugliness of Parliament rather. She hit me. In actuality, far from moving furniture, she was politicking for the squireship of Grandmother's country estate. Lost by a landslide!). There our lives forked, and, like the brothers in the fairy tale, we went different paths, leaving our daggers to rust, or not to rust, in the crucial oak tree. My life was not fated to go stepping in the Lippizaner school of married love, although I am built for it, like those magnificent horses, black at

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birth, white at maturity, for whom the difficult capriole is a proud inborn tendency. This is style for me, in art.

Kraneback in those days was more a town than a city. My best friend's appeal lay in her being different: not from the country, but a Professor's daughter, she had grown up among North Ankarean dialects, her father's field, between a brick cathedral, the university library and the cemetery, studying to become a high school teacher of English, French and Russian, planting flowers on her father's grave and watering his "recent" tombstone, doing errands for her mother, cultivating an older English friend, who had moved back to them after a short unsuccessful marriage, stranded by the war. They were seen together on bicycles in town, talking, my friend standing up, baskets at handle bars. The Englishwoman taught at the British Council, was compiling an anthology of English poetry for an Ankarean publisher and modestly writing an unpublished, mediocre novel in her room. If observed in a restaurant, she was reading Dickens. There was an older daughter, too, who at this point wanted to be a veterinarian but who, after infantile paralysis, became a high school teacher of languages. The mother, a strong-boned tall woman, ran her small family with tight reins, unemotionally, in a sense, following her husband's students in person and through her town daily, pince-nez and a cup of tea. She had used to give Swedish massage in France up to her late marriage to the considerably older professor. No wonder theirs were the lighted windows I chose to stand under every night ever since the yearlong clan battle around the estate started, in an effort to become other than "my" "inextricable" family, with my bicycle, pledging myself to what they meant for me. There was no instruction, properly speaking, given in those days, nor information nor counseling for students that a student might be aware of. I often felt as if I were living in a Lombard church frieze, riding among grotesques with leaves for tails, and their heads under their bellies. My friend also introduced me to the university library. She had her own key to the stacks, which are closed to the students.

I read Gustaf Adolf von Schack's history of Spanish drama. I noticed that Alexandre Hardy was the father of French tragedy and thought that film might develop into an art. I had on loan a *portefeuille* of Jacques Callot's *Misères de la Guerre* and stood a new leaf on my desk each day. I had a row of small luxury-bound Spanish

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classics. I read Grimmelshausen's *Simplicius Simplicissimus.* And after Callot's dancing pantaloons I took out a folio of Commedia dell' arte figures, drawn and colored by George Sand's son, Maurice de Guerin. I read Mérimée and liked his bear-man, with its many languages. I read Senancour, because I soon found that my history of literature disliked all the styles which I liked and so could be trusted inversely. I read *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy,* because at home we had only *Sermons by Yorick.* I read some Gautier, but there I got stuck, because my history of literature hated him so much (as it did Diderot and Wordsworth) that it felt like dropping in on a family quarrel (I never witnessed one). Thus, during my first term, I had all that I needed, if you add to this Chénier, Agrippa D'Aubigné and Ronsard, or would need, in life.

The war was *"J'ai vu le Reitre noir"* with *"der schwarze Tschako mit dem Totenkopf"* and nevertheless I knew enough for my legs to give under me when I was confronted, in the student's club, with a large grey front page photograph in our liberal daily, of many massed-together, flattened field coats in an opened ditch. The floor, the window, the table . . . They are doing it to other people than me! The moment of cruelty. The ambiguity of its attribution was not lost on me and I was not surprised at what later happened. "Later" because the evidence comes so late. Bullfights, of which I saw an excellent one after the war, are brothers teasing a sister. One is hardly unaware of these things.

Something exciting and interesting happened in June: my friend would spend a month with us in the country. Suddenly, in front of the hothouse, overlooking new apple trees, zinnias and red beets, on a scythed, high grass border around the gooseberry bushes, I sit laughing: "But they are *The Cherry Orchard!"* The bees buzz in the hawthorn hedge separating the garden proper from the hotbeds, a flashing square, which obscurely prolong the whitewashed quiet hothouse. With jealousy, as she went on to another friend after my month, a trite, goodlooking straightbacked girl, the delight of mothers-in-law, and went sailing on a sea, how blue, with sails, how white, with laughter how young and light compared to mine and that of my family; with waiting for her letter, with creeping behind the sofa to savor her "Love" instead of her usual Ankarean (Grandmother had called her only "Miss" with her last name. My friend had waved a letter at me: "Tell them not to write to me like this" — somebody

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had mentioned her dead father). Her friend had brothers, and a father, and uncles. I had been able to offer her only horseback riding — on one horse — and it had been a rainy month — her presumptions were very moving. I could see her crouched, writing.

It is difficult, you might say, to carry "superiority" with grace, if your context is frightening. Yet my brother's mock-despairing remark on the cows that went with a farm he had bought for himself, where he built himself a perfectly proportioned chalet: "They catch pneumonia if somebody sneezes next to them" has to do with our cousins rather than with his frequent childhood illness. They envied our health — paradoxically, in his case. Our unabsolute, intellectual mobility subtly shamed them. As children, our mother's attributes for us: "tiger back bridges, leading to pavillions, where wise men are drinking cups of mulléd wine" were natural. She had refused to marry her cousin, choosing our father, on a simple horse-breeding principle, how resented by our coeval relatives *she* will never know; her struggle being with her sisters and brothers, opters for the narrowness of degeneracy.

Our grandfather had come "walking to Rigden in clodhoppers" — more likely barefoot, putting on his shoes at the town barrier — and is responsible for the Venetian touches in granite, which make Rigden such a varied city.

Out of the awful happy dog mess most people made of it, I gradually let transpire (with no result, for no one seems to have taken it amiss) the real glory of "Platonic love." It changed my life completely so that I gave up my habit of visualizing recalcitrant people and reverted with approval to my photograph album, where I had painstakingly printed the name of my first friend under each of her easily recognizable photographs, on the assumption that otherwise her identity might get lost.

There was first, of course, the delight in shopwindows for men's clothing. Not until much later did I find out the interestingly different cut of men's trousers from that of the tight-fitting doll's pants we were gradually allowed to use. What won my heart was the materials — tweed, broadcloth — and the uninterrupted expanse needed from shoulder to hip, the buttons, the pockets, and the silk ties and the severe padded and closely stitched styles. In my youth no men-style shirts were available for women: a jacket or a pair of work pants inherited from a brother were prized possessions among Bohe-

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mian friends, but were never coveted by me. I even rather resented taking over a pair of gabardine riding breeches my brother found himself unable to use, with their jacket and waistcoat of the same glum material. Yet black-spotted red or blue ascots in shopwindows, pipes and hats were objects of long reverie. For my graduation from high school, I had added a black and gold shoulder strap and a gold button to my white woolen coat, and thus overcame what misgivings the unbridgeable nothing of university life might inspire.

Now, that I have a few hairs on my chin, and blue jeans with a zipper up front have destroyed the most beautiful part of a woman: her belly, I feel flooded by strange people's desire, well-meaning but misguided entirely. (I here use M.B.'s voice and hypnotic, imitative way of writing. She used it for translating jobs demanding more qualifications than she actually possessed.) I learned to distrust these. Meaning, as this does, that most women did not interest me, not even flamboyant ladies, and ladies of the world least of all, I nevertheless was delighted to discover my first dualist, with her fine threads of moralism forming a narrow mosslike pattern over roots of surprisingly coarse bad taste, stiff because of immanence and to be found at a fair distance from, but secretly directed towards, ladies of the world in case these were not one person, as also the immobile immanent narcissist of protracted power, who made such an amusing effect in my first book of poems, when a few lines by her were interspersed with mine as mock-ivory keys on a typewriter contemplating their navels where you might least expect it. I soon moved gingerly about them: it was clear that my interests were widely publicized, and "shared" by humanity. Shyly and doggedly working my way, I now notice with exaltation the tremendous impact it had on me to find in what looked like most unpromising terrain — I had kept avoiding it, or skirting it, for years because of its superficial similarity to the masochistic scholar, two little eyes, looking out from a perfectly coherent pattern: my first moralist, devouring the above-mentioned dualist with deliberate glee. At almost the same time I found the admirable loyalist, and a battle between the two, where the loyalist drew the short end of the straw on account of misguided fervor. His habit of nourishing great men attracted me, as a curiosity of the good old days, when people like Bismarck read Dumas, till I understood that it was — not really the other way round — the great man who made something digestible of the kind of material which to the

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loyalist was a protracted stretch of pain, to be excused and even admired in all its manifestations. During my youth there were great numbers of these half-frozen people, and I had a collection of them. As soon as I came to study them more closely, I found them freely represented in great books, but best in a story called "Spring in Fialta." The *Virginia frigorifera molluscens* is still sitting on my finger — so vividly do I recall the flash of lightning when I discovered her. Its clap of thunder is rumbling still, as I stand on one knee on the floor in my student's apartment in Kraneback, overlooking the sloping university yard at night, trying to decide what to do with her, landed on a rumpled rug and my big fur coat, but completely intact. Liquid bubbled from a secret hiding place in her of whose existence I had remained ignorant until then and which I discreetly visited. She asked me to "come up" in a distant, nasally moaning voice close to her trebled laughter in her most encouraging moments with me, when her excitedly shining eyes used to have stars in them, and I accommodated, knowing I was completely happy, exhaustedly, confusedly yearning to give her infinitely everything and faint. I disliked her intimation of her pull-up-the-nail-by-the-shoulders grip by which she motioned me to my proper by sentimental level, and I felt more like a cousin of mine than like myself, a cousin who used to display all discomfort as if it were an unreflectingly physical one. "*Odi et amo* — why is it thus?" she would say, adding my name. Two years later we were "married." This does not mean that I stayed with her much or didn't betray her as the pompous term goes. My first book of poems was completely, as already mentioned, under the influence of somebody else. What she wanted me to see, perhaps, was the "obsessional" character of my infatuation, irrespective of whom it engulfed. I think she liked me as I was, at twentytwo, with my numerous quasi-criminal shortcomings, although it was transparent to me that inside this body was a six-year-old girl with ash blond hair hanging down her back, and ashen the whole little person. I did catch her listening to my mother give her advice on what to do with my falling in with anybody present and imitating any set pattern. She considered her society too foolproof in its turning out of cool gingerbread hearts, but I always tried to give my life some trappings from my mother's life, thus beseeching her to be interested, at the same time making myself invisible in a pattern: an inevitable precaution. Wringing hands helps. She was to marry a

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prince with grey eyes; she wore a pale blue locket with a small silhouetted garden, and inside it her father's photograph and hair. She brought me her father's works to read after we made love. This father of hers, although he looked like W. B. Yeats, died one week after I had made his daughter's acquaintance, and since he was in the hospital, I never saw him. The part of our mothers as panders to our friendship seemed an extremely active one. Although they did not know each other originally, as soon as they met, they were in complete accord and jealous of the comparative prominence of their children. I was so scared of the strength of my passion, that our meetings came to an end, my friend telling me that I was afraid. Let anyone in my predicament know, that it is perfectly all right to tell her friend to follow the prescript of the Bible: "Do unto others," even when she aches with surprise that no one sees this flaming writing on the wall, and expects it to be, and thinks it already happened, because it must be, any moment. She didn't want me to kiss her mouth, either. All in all, this *Daphnis and Chloë* lasted two weeks. Whereupon the lover vanished, out into the dark night whence he had come. I do not know at the light of what oil his unravished bride had described me. There are people who don't care one way or the other. Mother wrote her a letter, telling her she was a bad influence on me. She (my friend, not Mother) said this had been the case, giving me *Zuleika Dobson* and saying: "This is how it is to be in love," adding my name. Mother could just as well have killed me with a gun. That is how much imagination this action of hers showed. You easily break dry sentimental people. To my childish imagination America is, in a muggy forest, the crackling of broken twigs under the steps of the approaching murderer.

But every time I hear the crickets, I recall waiting under her window at night. There aren't any numerous crickets in Ankarea, so that sort of thing doesn't seem to matter. The facts of memory, I mean. However, there had happened something unusual in her fate: that a young man had killed himself from her balcony a short time before I met her, and that she had been physically very brave during his life. Maybe she also picked violets with some other boy, going bicycling; we knew each other for very long, including a trip to Westmorland in 1946: rain in the morning, sunshine at noon; and I remember it as big, black violets, like clematis-sized myrtle, and as

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something wild, clumsy, topped by her merciless, slightly nasal laughter. At an early stage, she called my efforts around her body: *"Tant de bruit pour une omelette"* and she never expressed in words that she liked me, except for an obvious, late, quote: *"Chérie."* "Two years later we were 'married' ?!"

My family II: Mother "in America"

A box full of letters with blue and green borders, a richly endeavored verisimilitude reminding of the Gulf Stream, has objected to my taking up the pen, as they say. Its "Citrus, Indian River" reads upside down more clearly than I could do, the propensities of the room for a ceiling as dirty as the floor, and for ashes hanging in the fireplace like a very old wasp's nest with acid, molecular children. For I have burned envelopes there, my feet wide apart on the rippling ceiling, my hair reaching for the floor like a grasping hand, that shadowplayed the walls and got dirty. So let us sink down and see what we have done, if we ask other people.

Five years ago — and it is not longer — this same hand was holding the wheel on its way down south in a misty landscape. A warm shape huddled at its side and occasionally it patted on the knee. This same hand just massaged a scalp for headache on the couch in this room, and they are both the same. They say, that when the British left Yorktown, they played "The world turned upside down" on their fifes and bugles, the thin red line. I am of a melancholy disposition, they say, with a dislike for exaggeration, I say, so that is why, in all likelihood, the radio is on although the little ghostband is playing. Box full of letters, radio, fireplace. Ripples, flames and shadows. And me. As everybody knows, I am an attractive, charming character. I am kind, far too kind. Already when I stepped out of the car on a New Year's Day, in darkred fez and marvellously hairy fur coat, in the snow on that yard in the forests where I had been cordially invited, I was far too kind. The dogs jumped around me, and a ten-year-old boy with yellow hair cried out: "Mother, what has she got on her head?" and the thick, grey silk inside my fur coat fell open for all to see as I entered the yellow house with white pillars and corners and drew into my distended nostrils the peculiar fragrance of linoleum floors many times waxed

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and opened my twenty-seven-year-old arms for my aunt, a coyly tittering creature with a certain up and down jerk of her body from the toes upward and a snakish glint of absolute observation hidden behind her hand pursuing itself with two fingers at her oval bosom when she said: "Nice you are here. Let Astrid take your things upstairs. Dinner is at seven. We'll have a little snack when you are ready. Come down in the radio room." She was a remarkably talentless painter, I paused to think.

I followed the sturdy servant and her kitchen-red face, reminding of a sweet roll, upstairs as she hugged my strapped basketwork suitcase and, curtsying, left me at the door under a soaring eagle (*Artz*). I threw off my coat. The room was not warm yet, though a fire shrieked and bounced in a shining tile stove in the corner by the washstand and its nine folded towels of homespun linen — the kind with goose eyes in the weaving — and big red names. With a little falling feeling inside my chest from the change in atmosphere and the pleasure at soap, spring water and towels, all building a beautiful pale yellow and white like porridge made with wheat-flour and butter, swimming in its milk and easily cooling to form skin on top, I dried my hands and rehearsed what to discuss with my aunt while I looked out of the small panes at a spectacular oak in front of the garden with its distant temple, which had a swanlike whiteness with cream added, and a round copper roof. It had been erected lately, so the structure was heavy, German style, I should say Bayreuth. With this agreed the castles on the yellow walls, an European remnant in America, the heavy benches in the garden, very uncomfortable, almost impossible to lift, and the fantastically primitive beds, made with three transversal featherbeds and almost no mattress; in mahogany, however, with little beads along the fillets; and strong saddle girths supported the poor sleeper, who was actually meant to sit and sleep in them. There were two of them, both along the wall. Our visitor had once . . . But no, the snack is waiting.

Now I want you to believe something: women do not hate each other, neither is there competition between them.

Exaggerated women used to come to this place with its ambiguous hospitality. My aunt had a wistfully good time setting them up against one another with snickers and behind the hand half-tone remarks, since she thought they were after her money. Alas, this was

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not always the case. Some of them came because they could think of nothing better to do, whereof more later; and they were upset by her, as they thought, cynical behavior, because it implied purposeful volition. When she came to Ankarea, at four years of age, a cousin of hers had said in the timelessness and the abstract space set with a coarse porch step and a line of lavender: "Look, there is a butterfly!" and the little girl had answered: *"Schmetterling heisst es eigentlich."* Not until twenty years later had she learned that she owned the estate, overrun by cousins and aunts; and the uncanny disappearance of bachelors through fall trap machinations by her aunts took on a less supernatural significance, though she would always cherish *Don Giovanni* and be afraid of *The Adventures of Hoffmann.* (She was popular with Father's mistress and my oh so cutely superfeminine cousins of her branch, so I am imitating their unconvincing manner in this section. One always wondered what they were trying to prove, since they were married.)

She had very fine ankles. Her grandmother had danced at the court of Prussia before the French Revolution, a fairy tale that would have had no point unless her pompadour shoes and her fan had been in evidence, bigger than anything else in spite of their fantastic smallness. She also had a gold coin, displayed on a table in the dining room, the *Noth- und Ehrenpfennig* under the Napoleonic wars, that is, the coin they would save till utter misery would force them to spend it. She was a Nazi, of course. "They had done something nasty to poor Friedhelm in Yugoslavia." In the photograph, poor Friedhelm's pyramidical terraces were stuffed in a little SS-costume, atypical, I think, for a nobleman. Before the war the place was full of unnaturally splendid, raw youths with a propensity for missionary friendship. After the war, there came what was left over and went back when the army was reorganized (again!) with their valuable experience, unswerving loyalty and *Urgrosstante* in Weimar. (Among them was an Ankarean goddaughter, a former paramour of the German Commander's in Chief in Belgium, who had taken part in the plot against Hitler, corporal-voiced, but gem-beautiful when — this according to M.B. — she confessed her disastrous abortion. She taught me some dirty jokes. Now, she is the hostess of the Marsenga copper mines.) When she died, her nimble-footed, anxiously trained, spruce-climbing, horseback-riding and skiing body, the lifelong, patient

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goddess of M.B.'s aunt, Rilke's good friend at Borgeby,[1] (where he wrote his poem about the apple trees), who struck such heavy hard linear long-lined and long-skirted attitudes, learning — "pay attention to your negatives!" — which was an artist colony then, a concentration camp later, making, I thought, such "and nothing unexpected ever happens" woodcuts, and whose cousins wrote that great book on Spinoza; (sorry about that slip: they were in Dachau, those artists); gave away a secret of the Amazon only a physician had known: she had had cancer and had worn a stuffed bosom. Nobody could think of when. That is how solitary she was. (It was hard to tell them apart.)

But what interested me in her was a gold ring with an iron plaque, surrounded by diamonds, engraved with a horse (the family coat-of-arms). An ancestor had picked this iron out of his body on the Coromandel Coast, "another Polycrates," my aunt who read Schiller, would say, (although of the bleak historical school for which the only thing worth jotting down in a possible diary, is the weather, she had a liking for quirks of thought), when he served in the *Royal Ancaréen* under Bailly de Suffren.

Gone are the days of cool, white, monogrammed handkerchiefs which, found hidden in a tree trunk or burrowed in a sofa corner, could be returned, with a touch of voyeurism, to their owner.

When square-shouldered, unrhythmical, *garçon manqué,* in ugly clothes (especially an ugly sweater my faithless friend had sardonically knitted for me), I made my uncouth appearance, and plumped down, glowering, head bent, hands in lap, in one of her low chairs, her dog came up as if he had sensed the criminal, and growled at me, deep in his throat, and then withdrew backwards, growling, ears back, eyes upon me, till she stopped it and let him out, I think, with much laughter at my appearance, so as to succeed in making me laugh at myself and the whole situation. We are now halfway between Ankarea and the United States.

A month later (and how at this her arm, in dark lion-brown corduroy, buttoned at the wrist, comes into mine) she lost her voice

1 It is likely, however, that it was not Rilke, but Professor Lichtenfeld who wrote the following *zahme Xenie:*

Taschentücher zu säen ist eine Erfindung von Hanna;
Doch, so gross die Idee, bleibt doch aus der Erfolg.

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for a week, and satisfied us by giving us to understand that she had a sore throat. Actually, she suffered from shock. Her country doctor, a gruff old ram, had said she would drop dead within two months — slightly earlier. Reader, dear reader, what do you do when there are two months left? Go to the sea. Some other gruff but kind-hearted old mountain of a masculine house-friend was awfully willing to offer his seaside shack in return for help when he had been on hard days, and as a general mark of affection. Would anyone care to accompany her? She ought not to be left alone, surely? I was nobly willing to act the nurse and companion, in spite of the differences in social status.

Visualize the door of a North German manor at the triple distance of one hundred years and beloved fiction and the poet's expert longing (Theodor Storm *"Sprach todesmüd, doch süss, dass ich erbebte: 'Was lärmst du so und weisst doch, dass ich schlafe!' "*) and hence immobilized as socially paralyzed people can be, in a maple leaf setting. Maybe they really are maples! A big sunny stone for a door step, and around it no fairy-like creatures. "The backdrop fades." It comes rather close to it, the house where we met, in Southern Ankarea. Worked to near unbeing by a heart condition, her face so bloodless as to be grey and evoke "a heap of burned twigs" of no expression, topped and surrounded by a country artist's idea of curly, permanented hair, actually a pepper-and-salt wildly overgrown poodle cut, a theme echoed by her big brown poodle, about half her size, and worked also by arthritis and insomnia and the unintended consequences for her vision of her not having eaten enough butter during the war (she sent her coupons to refugees interned in the country), hence thin and with slightly protruding eyes which expressed acute anguish and had a peculiar, astigmatic stare, porcelain blue, wherein one saw no expression whatever in them; automatically, politely talkative (thinking her own thoughts, quite quite different and far away, meanwhile); susceptible to spiritualistic phenomena and suicide ideas; with coarse hands with enormous knuckles, and some vitiligo here and there on her arms, the marks and scars of other diseases on her body, and few and very old dresses to cover it (although so well-kept they did not attract unfavorable attention), lively, merry, on the surface, and helpful to everyone, with complete unselfishness and very staunchly, and always surprised

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at the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune and the slights and contumely, as if they had never occurred to her before, until the new moment, fighting bitterness and her insights with utmost bravery in order to help and do her duty, a word she would never have used, proud and interested in poetry, new and old, and the arts, such was M.B.

A heavy-featured, grey mask of cast lead (her face when dying), on the one hand, and on the other, me. I don't know more about them, at present. I never knew either of them well. Mother saw to it that it was mostly by hearsay, what little I happened to learn about them. At this point, they may be seen as constituting a kind of couple. The dying one recovered. One doesn't want to believe, though, that this was as easy and as automatic a process for her as the bully (one's past preceding this writing) knows one willing to think her agony to have been. In these cases one thinks oneself much more callous than she. The bully took revenge . . . (unfinished sentence). (Deprived me of physical reality.)

I realized that I was at first irritated out of proportion and then grateful in an almost tearful way (what caused my tears giving way to my tears themselves causing a new effect) whenever my cousin sighed and from the bedroom, presumably letting a book fall out of her hand finished, let fall also an audible: "So far, so good" or "That was that," or suggesting that dinner be made might say: "You have cabbage. Why don't you make a stew instead that would save you all those pots," or finally, in a finality I resented: "We won't eat until six will we? It is four o'clock now," or used the telephone for efficient messages.

But simultaneously I was very proud to walk around with her everywhere, showing her everything that would suddenly resolve — unanimously — to become real at last under her quick glance, her generous, appreciative and vivacious senses. She wore an amusing green hat like a little chimney, a ditto smart suit and yellow blouse last seen *In The Ravine;* her colors made it easy, I thought, to visualize one of the characters in this novel by Chekhov.

She left and the reaction came a few days later, as so often in connection with something surprising and beautiful — surprising and beautiful to the point where I thought myself pleased to be on my own again and felt it like an explosion: first the idea of liberty, then

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the flash of beauty, but it was all a merciful disguise for my sense of deprivation of an excess of ozone, almost as if Mother had been here, (she who thinks of herself, in her married past, as a circus equestrienne, standing on two horses), and played backwards as in a reflection it goes like this: When the shot blasted and I fully noticed this, I felt bullheaded with an extremely extended field of vision and it so happened that at the extreme left and right of my eyes like streamers, were the wooden sign of a basement coffee shop figuring a blue parrot on white and the red eye on white of the parrot and on my right, the stairs up to street level with an open door and the evening sky exactly the same blue and a red collapsible chair and white table the same reds and whites; all of it in bright light the early May brightness of artificial illumination.

Some days later gain — *pian' piano* here — in increasing mist — I was invited to the country by some dry, sentimental souls of the one-track minded, half self-protective kind of the desperate stutter and laugh, (he with little pauses in between), saintly in half-recalled behavior. Their friendly treatment of me there brought to life several feelings and attitudes I hadn't known since childhood and which my dreams had been powerless to evoke. Especially a certain hostility common in children and adolescents, which *seems* to be there only to be conquered: by an aunt who bade me pick raspberries: the mere mention made me obedient. It was important in this that the aunt be somewhat eccentric, I thought, never having met one before — and hence felt as a counterpart to the child. For here as I played a little game with myself while waiting for time to drive back to town again, momentarily alone in the house while the others did last things in the garden, I realized something of the concentric nature of a family, and its happiness — things I would maybe not have noticed in grey and distant Ankarea with its unenglish bitterness, but which are true there also. Sitting at the window I pretended I was a heroine in a book for young women, something I had never willingly read, (but I will have to read this many times), and this is how I caught the light indoors over my childhood just the way it was.

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Richard Gilman

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The trouble with all our talk about film as the "art of our time" is not that it puts too much pressure on the medium but that it is likely to put too little. What do we mean by that cant phrase but that film is particularly suited to the age, coherent with its presumed spirit and, indeed, a central manifestation of that spirit? In the same way the novel was once — and in academic circles still is — considered to have been *the* art of the bourgeois era, both for its social investigation and its construction as narrative, the organization of experience as tale, life as one or another kind of progression. Yet even in its golden, or Balzacian, phase, the novel, *as art,* was never so much the product of reflection of society and the age as it was their counterforce and augmentation, image and idea establishing a life and epoch of their own.

In other words the novel, like any art, occupies what we might call aesthetic time and not, except as a matter of mere chronology, the time of history, the time of the immediate and ongoing life of society — as society. Aesthetic time is peculiarly and properly out of joint with the age, which produces it disconsolately and with great suspicion, like any totalitarianism in whose midst an alternative persists. This alternative is ruled by chronometers of no utilitarian applications, and is a dimension for a crucial kind of inactuality. Aesthetic time, like religious time, is a mode of inhabiting the nonhistoric and noncontingent, an abode for certain forms of unauthenticity and for ways of being *unlike the present;* art, Picasso said, is the lie that leads to truth.

Religious time, like religion itself, is nearly empty now, but aesthetic time is merely unfashionable. It isn't present in consciousness to anything like the extent it has been in periods when art presumably existed for some "sake" other than that of society, the uses of art having undergone a severe pressure toward the actual. The notion of art as virtual slips away, and today any conception of aesthetic reality, espe-

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cially that of fiction and film, as "a lie" in Picasso's sense of it carries in many quarters a taint of something close to treason. Everything is being asked to serve and be enlisted (religion itself, in what may be dying efforts to survive by changing its nature, throws out guilt-ridden movements of "service" and "relevance"), whether for direct political and social ends or for that ill-articulated aspiration toward "new being," which is at bottom political and social and not personal at all.

There is a large irony in the fact that film has come to play so central a role in the progressive abandonment of the notion that art is a strategic lie and in the rise of a corollary idea — that art can give us the truth directly by its capacity to ensnare and overcome the palpable present by a sort of magical rite, that it can capture the enemy's image. The long struggle on the part of the cinema precisely to be accepted as an art began with its having to get past the belief that it was merely reproductive, a matter of mirrors and not new perception. And beyond this, the medium as it developed had to face down two other accusations, neither of which had any substance but possessed deep roots: the first in a tradition of art as "fine"; the second in the supposed opposition of art to the dehumanizations of industrial civilization.

We know now that the mechanical and technological elements of film's procedures are not aesthetic disqualifications any more than are the employment of tools and instruments in music, painting or sculpture, and that the widespread use of the screen for low entertainment no more rules out its possible aesthetic uses than best-selling fiction rules out the uses of writing as literature. Of course film, the late-comer, had no tradition of seriousness to appeal to.

Its recognition as an art form hasn't been in question for some time; yet film, as it is mostly being made above ground in America at this moment, has very little aesthetic identity in the minds of its chief practitioners and enthusiasts, or at any rate its most vocal ones. More ironies than one here: unquestionably better, more mature, more salient and thematically sophisticated as many of our new films are, superior as a class as they are to the great bulk of our movies for a generation, they are causing an excitement, an intensity and vigor of response much beyond what is accorded the current theater or new fiction, which has almost nothing to do with any perennial perspectives of "art" and almost everything to do with political, sociological and psychological phenomena that are either indifferent or actively hostile to such perspectives.

Of extremely uneven worth, movies like *Midnight Cowboy, Easy*

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Rider, Medium Cool, Coming Apart, Alice's Restaurant, Putney Swope and *Downhill Racer* are united in recommending themselves, or being recommended, as sophisticated agents of seized truth, windows on an actual world which, stripped of illusions and "false" stories, has surrendered itself to the camera as to a long awaited suitor whose triumphant virtue is his realism. These films shrug off the consequences of presenting themselves as imagination in the act of containing the history of the age as it makes itself. We are meant to believe that we would be unable to know that history without them, and more than that, we are meant to believe that we are assured a species of power over that history by having it placed in this way in front of us.

By "history" I mean the sum total of moral and psychic, as well as political and social, events — human existence on the level of actuality before imagination begins to operate. Now it is always difficult to separate the aesthetic from the all too human and material in works of imagination (criticism can perhaps be defined as the activity that attempts to accomplish this), but it is especially difficult to do it in relation to films, since they traffic with actuality in such a way and to such an extent as to put us under the continual temptation of seeing them as the interpreter and, much more decisively, the legitimator of reality. Or rather, this is one temptation; another and related one is that of seeing them as the validator (and of course in another use, a source) of the myths which rise up from actuality, become indistinguishable from it and in fact become in great sectors of our consciousness and behavior new actualities themselves. But whether it is dealing open-eyed and realistically with the way the world looks and is therefore supposed to be, or transcribing various dreams about it, film at this moment tempts us into thinking of it as a chief supplier of the most useful and unmediated truths about society and the age.

Against similar temptations we at least partly manage to allow music, dance, painting and poetry — but not fiction, the art closest to film — to retain independent qualities and autonomous being, to establish their existences at strategic distances from our own, to be actualizations of what is not otherwise present in reality, to be, finally, as Blackmur said, increments, augmentations, previously unheard of alternative facts. But the film, that medium the first stage in whose operation is to grant the visible world access to our sight, is more and more being arrested at that stage, being asked to give us not new perception so much as a copybook of the world as we already think or suspect that it is.

Cinéma vérité and the New Wave are imprecise designations and their examples are far from constituting a practice in absolute coherence

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with a body of theory. Still, they and other developments in the making of films have been moving toward the specificities and eventfulness of the actual world. Yet the point ought to be made that the best, although not necessarily the most influential works dominated by these impulses are still most importantly "truthful," not because they are "true to life," but because of *aesthetic* notions — or experiences — no matter how radically these notions may depart from sanctified definitions and criteria, as they do in the work of an innovator like Godard.

They may be more true (accurate) than immediately preceding styles to what we might call the facts, the actualities of our political and social existence in the historical present. But if so, their "truth" is the result not of ever having made the capturing and rendering of such actualities a *raison d'être,* but of a movement of artistic renewal that begins with a repudiation of the inorganic artifices and sterilities of a medium that had been feeding off itself. The new movements in cinema, predominantly the work of Italian and French directors, came into being when film art was felt to have become unfaithful to both imagination and reality.

Reality had itself sent up new questions and was composed of new specific weights and relationships, but this is what art has always had to deal with. It deals with it by freeing itself of the forms that previous artists had originated to make dispositions of what had been new reality in *their* time; film's turning back to actuality was simultaneously an act of devising new forms to augment it. So with "naturalism" and "realism" in any art and at any period. A generation ago the Italian Neo-Realists revolted against the sterile conventions of Fascist-bourgeois cinema; Antonioni and Fellini grew up artistically with the necessary wish to dynamite the Neo-Realists' own petrifying ideas of reality.

The influence in America of the latest regenerations of filmmaking has by now been so assimilated — or, more accurately, appropriated — that we are already on the high wave of something we can speak of as a new, post-Hollywood American cinematic morale and manner, though by no means of an independent and assured style. This morale and manner has meant that the world, hidden for so long behind fantasy and illusion, as though by a conspiracy to keep us from *knowing,* has come flooding on to the screen, carrying with it every verisimilitudinous gesture and face, all languages and vocabularies of currency, the seemingly authentic violences, pathologies and pornographies (as well as the stances that have been adopted against them) of the age and even of the moment. *The Graduate* and *Bonnie and Clyde,* two movies whose importance is of a rather different kind from what their admirers have

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claimed, mark the point when the American film seems to begin to take up in earnest the burden and question of America as a society, its self-consciousness and self-division, the very face and movement of its historical present.

All these films, which seem to come to us from such different starting points and in so changed a light from the Hollywood of the recent past, are the products of a complex background. That they are being made in such numbers is, of course, in large degree a technical and economic matter, as well as a sociological one, and that they are being made for the most part by a new breed of film person is another. But such matters, investigated down to their last detail, leave all the interesting questions in the air and leave the films themselves without means of being contemplated in their own right.

What everyone notices first in looking out on this scene is the youth of so many of those who compose it — the youth of the new American filmmakers and of their films' entrepreneurs, performers and hangers-on, the youth, especially, of their audiences. Like the new music, film these days is a young man's game and, like music, it is a game played in significant part out of a profound indifference, more than a violent hostility, to the prevailing middle-class culture and values. But it is also played out of a desire to impose upon society the truthfulness — of event, emotion and behavior — that the society has until now masked (and nowhere more pervasively than in films) from itself through fantasy and illusion.

It is *not* played out of a desire to impose on the world impressive monuments of sensibility — discrete and self-authorizing artifacts of imagination in the tradition of the *masterpieces* by which we have judged the progress and importance of art for the past several hundred bourgeois years. The new films participate in and are exemplary and influential expressions of that new spirit of political and cultural insubordination, that amateur and informal (antiformal in some of its manifestations) call to order by which it is hoped that the frozen values and procedures of the dominant society — forever faithful to sanctified forms and thus forever reproducing them — may be not so much overthrown as displaced. These films for the most part take themselves seriously only in the sense that they are serving something more serious than themselves, and what is meant by this is not art, not any transcendent or visionary mode of action, but life itself, life reconsecrated and wholly in the present.

This is an exceedingly human desire, but it is characterized by a naïveté that determines the inferiority (for all its superiority to its own

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immediate past) of the new American film to its European counterpart. I'm aware that in saying this my thought may seem to be running along well-worn and mostly abandoned routes — what have terms like superior and inferior to do with action, gesture, testimony; how do you judge what isn't meant to be judged but taken as life?

We can judge whether it is possible to create such things. To try to appropriate the truths of the world through an exclusive élan about what is palpably happening in society, to try to make "where it's at" the basis of your vision, is to trust that the world will yield up its pleasures and secrets in the face of sincerity, or what I would like to call *mere* sincerity. The tradition of art has never relied on that, which is why the search for forms has always had to go on. Within that tradition still, filmmakers like Antonioni, Fellini, Godard, Truffaut, Bergman, Resnais, Bresson work at the renewed obligation to take account of the present, to be accurate with the insistent materials of the here and now. They may even want strenuously to change things, but they do not work by ceding their vision to the public atmosphere and they do not offer us portraits of how it is.

That they are widely thought to try to do this is the basis for complaints against their ostensible failures, the extreme outcry in American film circles against *Blow-Up,* even among many of Antonioni's erstwhile supporters, being a particularly instructive case in point. In *Blow-Up* Antonioni was not attempting a portrait of London, swinging or otherwise, so that the accusation "that's not what it's like" was especially obtuse. If anything, Antonioni's stranger's eye on London provided him with the perspective of *strategic naïveté,* the freedom from any complacent conviction of knowledge, the antisophistication (and Antonioni, like any artist, is in need of unsophistication on the level of the human and social; you create in order to find out, not to exemplify what you think you know) that he needed to be able to set about his real business.

This was precisely to deal with the relationship between what we think the world is like — ideas derived mainly from what others have thought it is like and, today, from *publicized* ideas about it — and what the imagination together with all perceptive powers are compelled to decide. *Blow-Up* is "about" things society, as society, cannot know in regard to itself: the fact of life caught between knowledge and radical doubt, passion and enervation, reality and illusion. Its subject isn't London or sexual behavior or *ennui* among the chic, but the way the imagination attends to such things: all of Antonioni's films are artifacts of, and new forms of perception about, our present dilemmas and contradictions, not representations of them.

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Godard's films are even more directly about life and art, imagination and the actual. For this reason he can be said to be a more contemporary or radically advanced artist than Antonioni, although he is not necessarily a greater one. But he has made an even more explicit ground for his work out of a struggle against the use of film as illusion or story and out of an investigation of the pressures of actuality upon consciousness. The source of his influence, unequalled among young filmmakers both here and in other countries, is preeminently his having taken up with brilliant force and diversity the question of what film, that opening onto nearly everything there is, can and ought to do with its powers.

His enormous technical virtuosity, breaking rules and establishing precedents as it exhibits itself, is, of course, no hermetic series of mere feats, no skill practiced in the void, but a function — occluded and unclarifying sometimes, it's true — of his profound and active meditation on the uses of film as consciousness. This technical vocabulary has been widely adopted, but it isn't the basis of Godard's most important effect on those he has inspired or stimulated. What has chiefly been seized is less a technical matter than it is one of morale, of a method of procedure and approach to the making of films. In the possible rationales he has demonstrated for the making of films, in his having addressed himself with such protean energy to the matter of the filmmaker's responsibility in political and social realms, in his attempt to articulate a freely changing aesthetic that will at the same time illuminate a mode of action in the world, Godard has more than any other man changed the recent face of the screen.

But American filmmaking that has been influenced by him is mostly Godard minus Godard's embattled sense of the actual and potential misuses of film. In granting a new élan to cinema he has simultaneously put under interdiction its chief traditional concerns and intentions: to tell complete, shapely, consistent stories, to make the world seem more coherent than it is, to replace ordinary sight. Godard's quarrel with popular cinema, even, or perhaps especially, popular "arty" cinema, is analogous to Brecht's with popular theater: they are "culinary," made to be consumed, designed to satisfy, above all designed to leave intact the sensibility and thought — and thus the world — that are brought to it. In fending off this culinary impulse on the part of audiences so sophisticated that they devour the avant-garde the way their fathers did the retrograde, Godard has been compelled to change radically his procedures with nearly every new film, to shake his admirers loose from their belief that they "have" him.

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As much in the areas where Godard's influence has been paramount as in those where it hasn't, the new American cinema is still very much in the culinary stage. It is a new kind of diet certainly, far more sophisticated, tougher, more suited to our present constitutions. But it goes down too easily, is almost wholly and instantly digestible. What is being consumed in it is no longer debilitating fantasy; it is the ostensible portrait of the world, yet in the very attempt to gain control over the world through its realistic portrayal — through a refusal to allow it to be hidden in any detail — these new films shake no consciousness and sensibility; instead they reinforce what was already conscious and sensible, what was waiting to be consumed in a new shape.

They do this in the first place by their lack of aesthetic, as opposed to thematic or technical, daring, by their continuing to present not new relationships between consciousness and reality but new stories. Most of these movies are traditional narratives, relying on incidents moving in an inexorable line to an unsurprising conclusion, relying, too, on certain wishes and expectations of the audience — a trust, which is not betrayed, that the story will come out right. Which is not to say necessarily happily; in our sophisticated epoch, unhappy endings which confirm our previously-arrived-at unhappy conclusions about the state of society, are more than acceptable. In this way, a film like *Medium Cool* will be certain to have its protagonists die as a more or less direct result of the evil unleashed in Chicago in 1968; *Easy Rider* will have its heroes killed as the inevitable outcome of American prejudice and bigotry.

That these films are narratives — a tale of American violence in *Bonnie and Clyde* or *The Wild Bunch,* of American youth's disaffection and dropping out in *The Graduate,* of sexual appetite and pathology in *Coming Apart* or political pathology in *Medium Cool* — isn't what's crucial. What is, though, is that they are narratives *without impediment,* without counterforces to the tendency of the film (or novel) to serve as a solacer, in that subtle way by which comfort is likely to come whenever we see experience presented as consecutive and orderly, shapely and coherent, with its beginning, middle and end and the possibility of extrapolation of a moral. In the entire range of Godard's antinovelistic, antiillusionary devices, in Antonioni's calculated "boredom" and refusal of clear denouements, in Resnais' solicitation of time as unprogressive and nonconsecutive and Bresson's extreme leanness of image and austerity of incident, we see being fought this tendency of narrative to turn into extended anecdote and thus into nothing more than illustration of what we alredy have undergone or surmised.

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To give us what we have already experienced — this is the chief failure and insufficiency of this new American cinema of contemporary acumen and wordly consciousness. The irony is that the world isn't seen newly, or even with renewed attentiveness, but reflected through the clouds composing the *zeitgeist,* the public atmosphere of the moment. These raids on currency, the exploitation of what the moment holds up as seductive, are functions, to begin with, of economic plausibility; they are what will sell to the new young audiences for film, as romantic fantasy or pseudo-sophisticated pillow-talk comedy will not. But on a much deeper level they are functions of the inability of American filmmaking thus far to take hold of the lessons Godard and others have taught about actuality and the imagination, the nature of invention and the necessity of simultaneously adding to and subtracting from reality and not simply trying to reflect it.

Audiences are being seduced by a giddy sense of contemporaneity, by pretensions to the nitty-gritty, by modish sorts of "honesty" and *frissons* arising from the breaking of taboos. *Midnight Cowboy* employs a troupe of real Andy Warhol cohorts for no organic reason, simply as a titillating presence from the place where it's at. *Putney Swope,* a festival of chic clichés — clichés about blacks, whites, politics, sex, Jews, advertising, materialism — also offers a glossary of current, *down-to-earth* utterance: schmuck, dry hump, bullshit, mother-fucker. *Coming Apart,* pretending to psychological verisimilitude, exhibits far-out sexual activities with an air of announcing "we're the first to *show* these!"

That, I think, is at the center of this strange condition of a sophistication that is at the same time a profound naïveté. As I sat unsmilingly at *Putney Swope,* it seemed to me that the enthusiastic audience, made up mostly of very young persons, were responding in great part to what they had not yet heard or seen *out in the light,* to an experience, that is to say, of a crude, initiatory kind, full of emblems and icons of public awareness and of an eventfulness previously passed through in private, in actuality or supposition. And this eventfulness bristled with the sense of a social reality whose conquest by mimicry assuaged their terrors and overcame for the moment their impotence. I think that in large part film is being used this way now in America, the capacity of the screen to substitute for the world bringing about a kind of treacherously false education and false regeneration, a feeling of conquest grounded on a mistaking of the images and coerced reflections of the world and society for their truth itself.

In one of his interviews Jerzy Grotowski made the following remarks: ". . . in art it is not life itself that makes the context — it is the

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objects of art. That means to do a great work one must not observe life. That effort is artificial. We observe life as we live it. To say that in order to create I must observe society is wrong. Society is always there in our experiences." No one would claim that the currently fashionable and aspiring American filmmakers are ambitious to do great works. They are not even interested, as I've pointed out, in doing "art works" at all. But the truth of Grotowski's ideas applies to them willy-nilly. In matters of making imaginary things, even in the making of such "impure" objects as films, the context isn't life, the observation isn't of society. We have already obtained these materials, these truths. The point now is to subject them to the lie that resurrects and, in the deepest sense we have so far known, authenticates them.

Robert T. Fitzhugh

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Gaia Servadio

UP FROM UNDER

"What is pornography to one man," wrote D. H. Lawrence in his essay "Pornography and Obscenity," "is the laughter of genius to another." Lawrence was of the opinion that genuine pornography is socially harmful and should be destroyed legally. But if "pornography to one man is the laughter of genius for another" how can genuine pornography be detected?

Since what is erotic to one person might be pornography to another, I shall confine myself to my own reactions. I don't find "laughter of genius" in striptease, but I do find it erotic (i.e. not pornographic). Often, when I go to a new city, the local striptease is high on the list of the sights I intend to visit.

San Francisco is mainly kinky: cages, whips, boots; it starts from bikini downwards, leaving very little to the "strip" and relying on the "tease." Hamburg is real, Teutonic and rough. Hamburg is a harbor city and the shows cater to the small percentage of sailors who are not queer. The girls are clever, there is a voluptuous sordid note, the clubs are packed and, although nothing much is left to the imagination, the performances are short enough to leave the viewer with erotic curiosity. Paris: the Crazy Horse Saloon is too polished, the girls are too glamorous, we can see the same in *Vogue* almost as bare. But the sparkle or eroticism is neither in *Vogue* nor on the stage of the Crazy Horse. The same applies to the Lido, although the girls there belong to a drawing by Ronald Searle. The morbid shows, such as *Cocinelle* (male transvestism) and the kinky ones, are too elegant and contrived. New Orleans is straight tourism and the clubs are half empty. Soho, especially the smaller clubs, is perfection: the girls are intelligent, chummy. They know that fringes, plumes and anything that hides and discloses at the same time, is erotic. A few days ago I went to Soho in the morning and visited several striptease clubs. I found that most of

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them were already half full toward 11 A.M., but in no case was there a woman in the audience. In the Naked City, a rather small club—as usual, steps leading down, total darkness and strong red lights on the small stage, the girls stripped to nothing, something quite rare in England where a sequined triangle keeps law and police happy. The girls were young and pretty, each had her personification: the baby doll, the nasty governess, the nymphet, the kinky. "Don't be shy," said one girl who looked like Mia Farrow to an embarrassed gentleman; she was wearing no clothes at all. I found a big brunette, large body, painful secrets in her face, particularly erotic. She arrived on the stage wearing a long black dress and took a very long time before stripping. She was also making a show of her largeness and of wearing a cross between her big breasts.

The same morning I had gone to a place where they have blue films. The room turned out to be dirty and squalid past any expectation; the steps were a menace to one's life, there was no light at all and the films were neither erotic nor pornographic, just boring. When I asked for something more daring, I was asked to pay a supplement of two pounds to my previous ten shillings and so I left, convinced that the real blue film is probably produced after many supplements. Anyway, I don't find films of nude people exciting. I have seen some in San Francisco where indeed nothing was left to the imagination and every corner of sexual deviation was shown; they had a soundtrack of funny songs which made the films amusing rather than exciting.

Ordinary films can be very erotic since there is time to build a story, develop characters and situations before involving sexual love. Music is also very erotic, but of course, this varies enormously from individual to individual. I remember the baritone Geraint Evans telling me that he found the soprano trio in the third act of *Rosenkavalier* "purely orgasmic" (I agree) and that "My nails were deep inside the velvet of my stall" while listening to it. Wagner is very erotic too and acknowledged to be so. Mozart, who is my musical hero, doesn't spell eroticism except for one aria in *Die Zauberflote*. But then I could be influenced by what Einstein wrote about that particular aria (Monostatos running around the bed where Pamina is asleep). Bach is mathematical beauty and excludes eroticism. Some people find pop music erotic, but I don't (I find it pornographic) as it doesn't excite either my imagination or my body. But Gesualdo da Venosa's madrigals are profoundly erotic to me. (Gesualdo had also very odd and perverse sexual habits.)

The fact that I enjoy erotica and some pornography doesn't worry me at all. Although Doctor Kinsey points out that women don't like

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pornography, he seems to have based his research on the equivalent of what excites men, i.e., do women like to see naked men, or men stripping? Also a very small percentage of pornography is produced by women (one was Margaret of Valois, wife to King Henry IV of Navarre, who in 1558 published *The Heptameron*). Pornography created by men is generally concerned with detailed description of male genital performance or copulation. "These are elements to which females according to our data, are not generally interested [Dr. A. Kinsey]." This is true, but women enjoy erotica and some pornography. Of the writers, they enjoy the ones who don't insist on detailed descriptions of men's performances and probably they prefer the "perverted" writers (De Sade, von Sacher-Masoch). A lot of women I have talked to like striptease more than their husbands. This is not a form of lesbianism, but of aesthetics and voyeurism; the female body is far more harmonious than the male's. Women are the passive partners in lovemaking, they are the natural *voyeuristes,* obvious intellectualizers of sex. Although producers of erotica and pornography cater mainly to men, some have obviously realized the potentiality of a woman's market. First of all the advertisers: scents and stockings in women's magazines are not advertised by handsome men smelling scents or looking at legs with delight, but by marvelous girls, often seminaked. Magazines like *The New York Review of Sex* in its *Special Anal Intercourse Issue,* talks to women, explaining how new frontiers of excitement are offered to them. Another American publication, *Climax,* has a cover story of a woman who explains to another girl how she should give pleasure to her husband, who is otherwise on the point of leaving her for the uniformity of her sexual postures. *Pleasure* goes further. (I confess to having been rather embarrassed when, asking for a copy of the magazine, the newspaper seller screamed to his helper, "Hey, give *Pleasure* to the lady.") It publishes a long letter by a woman explaining why she enjoys reading the magazine so much and why more women should buy it. The letter is pure pornography and, like another article signed by Tina Bellini, it is clearly written by a man. (Like so much erotic literature which is published under female pseudonyms, like Pauline Réage, etc.)

It is interesting to note that there is a specific effort to conquer the female pornography reader. But places where one buys erotic publications or striptease clubs are generally exclusively for men.

When I went to buy some pornography on Forty-second Street, the owner of the shop tried to send me away. I reassured him that I was there in order to buy. Later, seeing me there, other women entered the shop. Another time, walking in the forbidden street of shop-window prostitutes off the Reeperbahn, a "professional" started screaming at me.

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I told her that I wasn't there to sneer and when she asked me why I was there then, I said I was interested to see that street. In *The Folklore of Sex* Dr. Albert Ellis explains that pornography for women doesn't exist for a *lack* of taboo rather than the contrary. "Because we make little fuss about bare-chested men, few extra copies can be sold by thus exhibiting them." I don't think this is valid at all, since a photograph of a totally naked man would sell extra copies to homosexuals, but not to women.

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VARIETY

PRIVATE LIVES

As a theater for dramatizing intelligence, memoir is currently overtaking the novel. Twenty years ago Frank Conroy's *Stop-Time* would have been costumed as a "first novel." Today it appears openly as a memoir. Most recent memoirs are by writers who in other times would be uttering proclaimed fiction in novels, plays, poems: Malraux, *Anti-Memoirs*; Nabokov, *Speak, Memory;* Lillian Hellman, *An Unfinished Woman*; J. R. Ackerley, *My Father and Myself;* V. S. Pritchett, *A Cab at the Door*; D. J. Enright, *Memoirs of a Mendicant Professor*; Paul Goodman, *Five Years*; Mailer, *Cannibals and Christians, Advertisements for Myself, The Armies of the Night.*

* * *

Memoir: autobiography — or a piece of one — visited by a special instinct for shape.

* * *

"Imagination and memory are but one thing, which for divers considerations hath divers names." —Hobbes.

* * *

Stages in the passage from literal to figurative:

(1) diary
(2) autobiography
(3) memoir
(4) first person fiction
(5) third person fiction.

Memoir in the center, mediating between annals and myth. "There is, it would seem, in the dimensional scale of the world a kind of delicate meeting place between imagination and knowledge, a point . . . that is intrinsically artistic."—Nabokov. If the saints of the memoir world are Boswell, Casanova, Rousseau, its prophets are Aristotle and Coleridge.

* * *

Diary: "Stayed in bed. Went through my poems. Bibs visited me, and I said 'Allegro' to her. Lunched in my dressing-gown with the nursery party. Went back to bed again, getting up in my yellow taffeta to receive Alex at five. He stayed a long time."—Cynthia Asquith, *Diaries, 1915-1918.* Aristotle's *story.* Coleridge's *particular.*

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Memoir: "As I write this I have completed seven and a half years [teaching English] in Singapore, *in situ*. It has been touch and go at times — more than once the suitcases have been hauled out of the cubbyhole under the staircase and dusted down — and there is no guarantee that the butterfly will be resting on the same leaf when this book is published. Even so, and I say this with petty-minded pride, I have for what it is worth, by dint of silence, exile, cunning, hysterics, sloth, 'low posture' (as the sociologists call it), and simplemindedness, exceeded the [seven-year] period desiderated by the professor [who interviews candidates for overseas jobs]. A sort of victory." — ENRIGHT. Aristotle's *plot*. Coleridge's *the universal*.

* * *

Diaries: literalists, or scientists, knowing nothing worth knowing. "[During 1944] I kept diaries of greater length and detail than I have ever done before or since, but when I read them last year, and again last week, they did not include what had been most important to me, or what the passing years have made important." — HELLMAN.

* * *

ERNEST: Life, then, is a failure?

GILBERT: From the artistic point of view, certainly.

—WILDE, *The Critic as Artist*.

* * *

Ackerley's "Foreword": "The apparently haphazard chronology of this memoir may need excuse. The excuse, I fear, is Art. It contains a number of surprises, perhaps I may call them shocks, which, as history, came to me rather bunched up towards the end of the story. Artistically shocks should never be bunched, they need spacing for maximum individual effect. To afford them this I could not tell my story straightforwardly and have therefore disregarded chronology and adopted the method of ploughing to and fro over my father's life and my own, turning up a little more sub-soil each time as the plough turned."

* * *

Like the business letter, the sonnet or the long American free verse poem, memoir is a genre, and only a certain voice can speak in it plausibly. The memoir voice betokens an instinct for duplicity and irony, for wit in the old sense: Mailer, Malraux, Ackerley, Pritchett, Enright, Conroy. Faulkner's Benjy can contribute to a proclaimed fiction, but he cannot write a memoir. No matter how deeply memoirists suffer and no matter how much they have to confess, they are still winners. De Gaulle, Montgomery, Alexander plausibly write memoirs; General Walker does not.

* * *

Contemporary experience is *ad hoc*. Writing now validates itself by arguing its origins in credible personal experience.

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I saw *the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, / starving hysterical naked.*

The fictions of Burroughs, Genet, Beckett. Shapiro's *The Bourgeois Poet;* Lowell's *Life Studies* and *Notebook: 1967-68;* Berryman's *His Toy, His Dream, His Rest.* Even *Portnoy's Complaint*: "As well as being written in the first person, it is written to and for the first person, by, with, and from the first person." — KINGSLEY AMIS. Note: Contemporary bad novels do not lean towards the mode of memoir: Updike, O'Hara, Snow.

* * *

Why is the serious contemporary intelligence uncomfortable in the third person? Speaking of the impact on him of Forster's third person novels, Mailer suggests the reason: "I think I must have felt . . . as if I would never be able to write in the third person until I developed a coherent view of life. I don't know that I've been able to altogether."

* * *

Literary vacuums will be filled. The courtesy book, the sermon, the collection of maxims have disappeared: the memoir assumes their functions — disseminating home truths about practical life, counseling from worldly experience, testifying about the solid world within a plausible context of supra-novelistic credibility, a context verified for skeptics by the trade category "non-fiction."

* * *

Living *ad hoc,* we need data that seems verifiable.

* * *

Memoir is the only contemporary place where credible first person testimony can occur.

* * *

Project: to compile an anthology of useful truths from contemporary memoir. Arranged under heads, these could make a pretty gift-book for the young — our equivalent of Chesterfield's *Letters.* Toynbee's *Experiences* tells an examinee paralyzed by terror how to slide through an exam, and a writer with a block how to get working. Paul Goodman to pipe smokers: "If the tobacconist doesn't know the brand and has to fumble around for it, don't buy, it will be dry." Franz Schoenberner in *Confessions of a European Intellectual*: "Only small debts are really dangerous. On a larger scale, debts are credit, and if your credit is very large your creditors themselves cannot afford to drive you into bankruptcy, where only a small percentage of their claim could be recovered." Rudolf Hoess in *Commandant of Auschwitz*: "Nothing has a more demoralizing effect on subordinates than the absence of their superior officers at the beginning of the day's work due to over-indulgence in alcoholic consumption on the previous night."

* * *

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Of all modern literary forms, it is in memoir alone that acts of social charity can occur. In *An Autobiography* Edwin Muir gives a recommendation to his Alsatian maid Hilde: "Her ambition is still to run a hotel of her own, and if anyone who reads this has good sense, imagination, an interest in hotels, and money to spare, he can do nothing better than hand some hotel over to her; in Italy if possible. It would repay him and give a remarkable woman the chance of her life."

* * *

It is only in the memoir context now that moral-political generalizations can be redeemed from pomposity or fraud. What does the job is the light pressure of plausible personal details and an idiosyncratic tone. Hellman on France: "It may be the only country in the world where the rich are sometimes brilliant." Enright on the drift of modern history: "Happiness and success are private matters, whereas misfortune and failure appear to have more of the public about them, they are of wider relevance, they partake more of what we call 'our time.' Weep, and a large part of the world will have reason to weep with you; laugh, and you laugh alone."

* * *

To be credible, contemporary personal experience must begin in humiliation and end in confession. *The Story of O* and similar pornographies speak to our need. Mailer "would confess straight out to all aloud that he was the one who wet the floor in the men's room." Hellman's "fourteen or fifteen years of heavy drinking," together with lots of fornication, one abortion, much despair, fear, contempt. Ackerley's sterile, miserable queerhood. Enright's drinking follies, academic indiscretion, "proneness to accident and scandal." Goodman's lust, dishonor, self-hatred. Lowell, "glad to share private embarrassment," insists that we "See the cigarette match quaking in my fingers."

* * *

A paradigm: *Krapp's Last Tape.* Krapp: an early draft of Berryman's "Henry." Their shame is embraced as universal.

* * *

One source of the shame: the complicity of intellectuals in the contemporary environment of expediency. A minor sign of the expedient environment: the study of linguistics displacing the study of literature. Enright: "The growing ascendancy of language teaching (the provision of means) over literature teaching (the examination of ends) is only another instance of what seems to be happening all over the world. . . . The measure of our self-contempt is that before long we may finally be content to be 'realistic.' "

* * *

"Memoirs begin to proliferate when religion loses its power." — Malraux. To bring it up to date:

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confession begins to dominate when writers fully understand their inability to influence public events. Goodman's subtitle: *Thoughts During a Useless Time.*

* * *

Thus personal shame is the mark of serious literary production in our time.

* * *

Why does the rehearsal of the
public events of his life
always strike him as a list of
failures, pal?

—BERRYMAN

* * *

Mailer's need to confess objectifies itself in his favorite image of heterosexual sodomy, with Mellors an act of love, with Mailer admittedly an act of tyranny.

* * *

As late as 1963 Henri Peyre was asserting that "Nowhere do autobiographers accuse themselves of coxcombry, of silliness, of cowardice." Does this only suggest Peyre's lack of perception, or does it perhaps indicate the suddenness with which confession has captured every kind of writing?

* * *

A structural model for the contemporary memoirist: Malraux's *Anti-Memoirs,* which not merely disdains chronology but, as an "eccentric museum," accumulates and juxtaposes a variety of literary kinds — film treatments, short stories, bits of overt reminiscence, chunks of history, interviews. It is the method of Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself,* but in Malraux the ego is restrained by rituals older and more universal than those Mailer has access to.

* * *

A model for the management of image and symbol: Hellman's *An Unfinished Woman,* with its exquisite visualization of events within symbolic spatial environments. The manuscript-reading building at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer rendered as a precise figure of intellectual disaster: "Twelve men and two women sat in a large room in a rickety building on stilts, and every small tremor — and California had a number of tremors that year — sent the building atilt." Hellman places all experience within a significant architecture: "I am sitting in a pine forest, propped against a tree. . . . I want to be where I am. I want to stay in this forest."

Paul Fussell, Jr.

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BOOKS

PUBLIC VOICES

NOTEBOOK 1967-68. By Robert Lowell. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $6.00.

THE COMPLETE POEMS. By Randall Jarrell. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $10.00.

INCARNATIONS: POEMS 1966-68. By Robert Penn Warren. Random House. $4.00

LOVE POEMS. By Anne Sexton. Houghton Mifflin. $4.00.

SPEECH FOR INSTANCE. By Sidney Goldfarb. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $4.95.

THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETS: AMERICAN POETRY SINCE 1940. Ed. Mark Strand. The World Publishing Co. $8.95.

NAKED POETRY: RECENT AMERICAN POETRY IN OPEN FORMS. Ed. Stephen Berg and Robert Mezey. Bobbs-Merrill. $8.50.

Robert Lowell's seminewest volume (this review cannot catch up with his prose variations, partly cribbed and partly brilliantly diversified from a very flat prose version, on Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*) oddly reminds me of his friend Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night, Miami and the Siege of Chicago,* and these other journalistic pieces in which Mailer so brilliantly foregrounds himself against a background of political conventions, protest marches, police baton charges, and so on, all exciting and racy things in themselves, but seeming more and more a convenient and delectable pretext for the exhibition of a personality and a rhetoric. Mailer is sometimes as good as the young Carlyle, like the Carlyle of *The French Revolution.* Lowell, like a true poet, is less shy; he does not have to refer to himself, like Mailer or Henry Adams, in the third person. He has the easy assurance of somebody who, in his fiftieth year, has completely arrived. The slightly roughened up sonnets in which this journal of a year's thoughts and interests are written move as part of a narrative and reflective unit, addressing or reflecting on dead or alive friends, keeping up with the political scene, giving us frequently, in poems on Rembrandt and Charles V and in a brilliant off-the-cuff version of a famous sonnet of Mallarmé's, what an English humorist, Patrick Campbell, calls "a short trot with a cultured mind."

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One would not begin to call these poems facile, or even if one did, the bits of information, what Eliot said about Pound and what Pound said about Eliot (and about his own shame for his Jew-baiting Rome broadcasts), would still make the poems as readable as a first-rate volume of memoirs. One would not say facile: but, as about no previous volume of Lowell's, easy and lucid, so that he who runs may read. The early poems, in *Lord Weary's Castle,* for instance, had an extraordinary knotted-up, self-torturing quality. In *Life Studies* a new ease was bought at the price of using the private as the public. But with Lowell's growing fame and assurance, the private has become the public; rather like Auden in the 1930s in England, what happens to, or happens to interest, Lowell is news. He is the civilized mind in a sense relishing, like the poets of the late Roman Republic and the early Augustan age, relishing at least poetically, the very violence he morally deplores. Whatever anybody could say about the contemporary American scene, nobody could say it is boring. This is a great period for poets in the United States, the place where the action, the suffering, the sense of general breakdown and possible renewal, are. It is not a great period in peaceful, law-abiding, nonviolent, and morally constipated England.

One should give a sample of the new style, and I shall choose not one of the wonderful gossipy thumbnail sketch poems about other poets, politicians, relations, but Lowell's version of a "pure" poem, Mallarmé's Le Cygne ("Le vierge, le vivace, et le bel aujourd'hui"), since this is an almost untranslatable poem and since I once made not a bad shot at it myself.

The virgin, the blind, the beautiful today,
dares it break the mirror of this lake,
hard, neglectful, hoarding under ice
a great glacier of flights that never fly?
The swan worsens, remembers it is he,
The magnificence that gives itself no hope,
the fortitude that finds no raison d'etre —
the great boredoms blaze in the sterile winter.
The whole neck shakes in this white agony
inflicted by the space the swan denies;
he cannot deny the ice that ties his feet.
His pure brilliance led him to this grand asylum,
governed by staccato cries of grandeur,
pride that clothes the swan in useless exile.

My own shot was:

The virgin, bright, and beautiful today
Dare it now shatter with a drunken wing
This hard forgotten lake, this ice where cling

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These flights of mine that never flew away . . .?
Once was a swan, remembers it is he,
Magnificent but hopeless in his strife
For never having sung the realms of life
When winter shone in bleak sterility.
His neck in a white agony is shaken,
Shattering the space that mocks him for his pride
But not the soil in which his plumes are taken:
Phantom mere brightness to this scene has drawn,
Immobile in the cold, where dreams deride,
Clothed in the useless exile of the swan.

Lowell, as always, reads wonderfully like Lowell; perhaps I read a little bit more like Mallarmé. I do not know why he deliberately mistranslated "vivace" as "blind" (though my own "bright" is not quite right for that, either) but he is quite free of the old-fashioned literary clichés, "realms of life," "hopeless in his strife," which scatter my version: and there is no line so good as

governed by staccato cries of grandeur,

in my version, though, so far as I can remember the original, this line is purely Lowell's invention, and has no relation at all to Mallarmé's penultimate line. He treats the original cavalierly, because the symbolist idea of the poet trapped in the icy sterility of the poem is something as far as possible from his own large, careless and fruitful involvement in every aspect of American personal and public — personal *as* public — life.

Lowell is a great admirer of the late Randall Jarrell, in whom this large, careless and fruitful involvement is, in a sense, even more obvious. Jarrell, like Robert Penn Warren, and unlike Lowell, strikes me as a poet whose poems are primarily the poems of a prose writer. There is nothing invidious about this remark, for it is true also about Hardy and about Lawrence. But Lowell at his most rapid and easy is still controlled by poetic closure, the sense of the poem dictating its own form. Jarrell, as in that fine poem, the title poem of one of his later volumes, "The Woman at the Washington Zoo," or even more in the much longer second poem in that volume, "The End of the Rainbow," goes on till he has finished what he has got to say: as prose writers do. It is detail, texture, modulations of thought and feeling, what one of the anthologies I am reviewing calls "open forms," that attract us in general, not the sense of finality. And perhaps I am wrong about the nature of prose: one stops not because one has said everything, but because one has said enough for the time being. Lowell can write, and very well, in strict stanza forms; but the sort of pleasure one gets from his poems is if not the same, yet a very similar, pleasure to that which one gets from read-

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ing his critical essays or that brilliant comic novel *Pictures from an Institution.* At his best, I think, he needs some space to spread himself; and, as with a good prose writer, it would be very hard to prove how good he is by isolated quotations. The richness is the feel and easy movement of the whole thing.

I think Robert Penn Warren is much more isolatedly quotable. And the rhythms and the repetitions (like Lawrence, rather than like Hardy) *make* the meaning rather than, as in Jarrell's case, the what-is-being-said. There is a frequent effective use of a spaced-off, left-hanging last line. To illustrate all this from one good short poem, "The Enclave":

Out of the silence, the saying, into
The silence, the said, thus
Silence, in timelessness, gives forth
Times, and receives it again, and I lie

In darkness and hear the wind off the sea heave.
Off the sea, it uncoils. Landward, it leans,
And at the first cock-crow, snatches that cry
From the cock's throat, the cry,
In the dark, like gold blood flung, is scattered.
How

May I know the true nature of Time, if
Deep now in the darkness that glittering enclave
I dream, hangs? It shines. Another
Wind blows there, the sea cliffs,
Far in that blue wind, swing. Wind

Lifts the brightening of hair.

This is a poem, I suppose, on the Proustian theme of imagining and recapturing a distant place in a place different and similar enough to make the distant place more achingly real than the place where one actually is. The distant place might be a mystical place (the light shone in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not). But it is probably not a mystical place for it includes a real loved person, her bright hair lifted by the blue wind (one is reminded of Hardy's Cornwall, of his "air-blue gown"). The dark place where the poet is might be a West Indian island; the cry of the cock in "the dark, like gold blood flung" suggests a Voodoo ceremony. The poem works by contrast like those of light and darkness, but also by similarities, for wind blows from the sea both in the imagined bright enclave and in the actual dark island. While the poem works almost Lawrentianly by word repetitions, the metrical handling, particularly the enforcement of a metrical pause at the end of a line where there is not a sense pause (when is an en-

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jambment not an enjambment?) as at the line-ending words, "forth," and "How" and "Another," has a subtlety and sophistication of which Lawrence was either not capable or not ambitious. Notice, also, how the hanging last line

Lifts the brightening of hair,

is like a small one-line imagist poem in itself, and gives a perfect sense of poetic closure. A scholar-poet, a scholar-novelist, Robert Penn Warren is exemplary for skill.

Skill is not exactly the most striking quality about Mrs. Sexton and Mr. Goldfarb, though they are very readable and not at all clumsy or inept writers, the striking quality is, rather, an honest American wish, in the tradition, say, of Frank Harris (I *think* he was American born), Henry Miller, Norman Mailer and goodness knows how many others, to tell us, in funniness and sadness and occasional "shocking frankness" (but is anybody shockable any more?) all about themselves. I am not sure that that beautiful poem of Robert Penn Warren's which I have been teasing at tells us anything private about Warren; it is universal, as they say; like Proust or the symbolist poets at their best it tells us something about ourselves. But Sexton tells us about Sexton, Goldfarb about Goldfarb, and the universality must come, if at all, from their both being in their different ways pretty representative human types, handy contemporary models of the common human mix.

It all sometimes strikes me as too ingratiating: Mr. Goldfarb:

I get out of bed without breaking anything
I give my daughter Cheerios and bananas for breakfast
First I let her stand on the table
Then I let her put her foot into the cereal
I look into the mirror and say, "Sidney, you're no criminal!"

Or Mrs. Sexton, being noble and catty (and to a poor old button-mouthed Britisher like me, God, how embarrassing!) about her lover returning to his wife:

(*She is all there*)

She was melted down carefully for you
and cast up from your childhood,
cast up from your one hundred favourite aggies.

She has always been there, my darling.
She is, in fact, exquisite.
Firework in the dull middle of February
and as real as a cast-iron pot.

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Let's face it, I have been momentary.
A luxury. A bright red sloop in the harbor.
My hair rising like smoke from the car window.
Littleneck clams out of season . . .

And so, in the same bright-inventive manner of party-going witty and nobly controlled hysteria, for a considerable number of stanzas, on.

Both Mr. Goldfarb and Mrs. Sexton are what Kingsley Amis would call "a good read." But if one believes at all in the existence of something that could be called not pure, but high, poetry, they want too much to use their poems to get the reader interested, sympathetic about them as persons. They want to be loved, poor dears. A true poet doesn't: he or she cares about the poem, about getting it as near right as possible, and then letting it go (once it is in print, in the periodicals, the anthologies, the slim volumes, he probably never looks at it again. There are so many better poets than himself to read). Robert Lowell is probably largely to blame for this kind of poetry with its flies unbuttoned (but not for the Lucy Show aspects of it) because of *Life Studies.* That volume had a wonderfully liberating effect on himself, but it did encourage in too many others a kind of cosy exhibitionism.

Yet, when one has said all this, one's criticism of Mr. Goldfarb and Mrs. Sexton is in terms of the highest possible poetry, which theirs isn't, not in terms of general literary efficiency; they are human voices, and they know how to make themselves heard, and they don't fumble or muff, they get the effects they are aiming at, and they are interesting as human persons — and especially as human persons wanting other persons to get as interested in themselves as they are! — and one wouldn't want at all to have them simply silenced, to have them not here. The voice of a man speaking to men, Wordsworth's phrase, must be raised a bit nowadays, perhaps, like that of an effective talker at a literary cocktail party, through the noise and the interference, if it is to be heard at all. But again, perhaps the very best poets in our exciting, vulgar age talk largely to *themselves.*

What is clear from both the anthologies on my list, *Contemporary American Poets* and *Naked Poetry,* is that the breakthrough into poetic speech from shy strangulated silence is infinitely easier in the United States than in England: where the only people who seem to manage it are the happily uneducated, like the Liverpool Beats. Both these anthologies project voices that one wants to listen to: and the highly learned poets can be as coarse, direct, button-holing, elbow-twisting, as the boys from the Bronx or the Corn Belt. It is a good American poetic period. I think, if one likes peace and quiet, one is lucky to live in England. But if one likes to read poetry, and if one's taste is catholic

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and inclusive, like Saintsbury's or Auden's, not snooty and exclusive, like Matthew Arnold's, one is lucky to have such rich fat batches of new American poetry to read.

G. S. Fraser

LET IT BE

ROCK, FROM THE BEGINNING. By Nik Cohn. Stein & Day. $5.95.
ROCK AND ROLL WILL STAND. Ed. Greil Marcus. Beacon Press. $7.50.
THE AGE OF ROCK. Ed. Jonathan Eisen. Random House. $6.95.
THE STORY OF ROCK. By Carl Belz. Oxford Univ. Press. $5.95.
LILLIAN ROXON'S ROCK ENCYCLOPEDIA. Grosset & Dunlap. $9.95.

In 1969 the impact of rock on popular culture and the public imagination was dramatized by an event and a nonevent — the Woodstock festival and the rumored death (and impersonation) of Paul McCartney. Woodstock captivated the media with the size and spirit of its crowds and the McCartney riddle became a metaphysical news story. In each case, the intensity of the response made news. The reaction to McCartney was particularly interesting because it involved the audience in what amounted to a mass exercise in creative paranoia, a way for them to contribute actively to the entertainment conspiracy. The audience became critics, close-reading album covers and notes, close-listening to lyrics, playing records backwards, even training mirrors on the covers at various angles to pick up veiled clues, among them several phone numbers that supposedly connected the caller with the mysterious Billy Shears; some callers claimed they received a series of postcards postmarked with place names out of the Beatle world — Strawberry Fields and Penny Lane. Consciously or not, the Beatles had generated enough material to perpetuate the mystery. Each of their last four albums contained evocations of death and a number of suggestive and mysterious phrases which became disturbingly apt in the context of the rumor. Forced to insist that he was the *real* Paul McCartney, Paul complained, "We can't control what people read into our music." In a much earlier interview with Alan Aldridge (reprinted in *The Age of Rock*), he said:

> We write songs; we know what we mean by them. But in a week someone else says something about it, says that it means that as well, and you can't deny it. Things take on millions of meanings.

Some months later Paul McCartney released a solo album accompanied with remarks implying that the Beatles had broken up. At the same time

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he made it clear that he was open to the possibility of recording with the others. George Harrison, in a radio interview in May seemed confident that they would — or should — continue to get together at least once a year to make records. The McCartney solo album is still really a Beatles album — the Beatles touch is still there, and the musical influences of the others are obvious throughout. Since the Beatles have created themselves (and have been created) so powerfully in the public imagination, to speak of a "break-up" as permanent (in a context characterized by change) is a bit like saying rock 'n' roll "broke up" because it isn't the same in 1970 as it was in 1956 or 1965.

However true or false both rumors are, the phenomena is a tribute to the world of ambiguities projected by the music of the Beatles. The best rock contains the same range of possibilities. The word itself seems too limited to support the musical and cultural experience it has come to represent, and most of the language used to describe it fails to catch the open spirit of the music and the excitement of the rock experience.

Rock and roll began as a revolt against solemnity and the mechanical "formula" love ballads which had been dominating popular music. Most responses to rock today (particularly in the major magazines and newspapers) mechanically assume the smug, formal language of the review, or else stretch diction in a desperate effort to sound as "young" as the music. Other writers tyrannize over rock with far-fetched metaphors. The result is usually ludicrous:

> Overnight the visionary powers of John Lennon failed, and a wave from the time machine swept this generation's greatest genius back to the safety of that childhood shore where Elvis, Chuck Berry and Little Richard forever dig the dirty sand and shove it into smutty buckets.

Albert Goldman wrote the sentence (part of a review in *Life*), apparently unaware that irrational imagery, which works in songs by John Lennon, may look foolish in review.

The Beatles attract the most neurotic reactions. Critics approach them suspiciously. A Beatles album is rarely judged in conventional terms. The language becomes hyperbolic. ("Disaster!" cry two different reviewers about two different sides of *Abbey Road*). Some reviewers, like Geoffrey Cannon are fatuously melodramatic: the Beatles have "disintegrated. . . . They're lost; and they are lost to us." The Beatles also inspire distortion, misinterpretation and the most egoistic patronization, and they have often been condemned for that eclecticism which is most characteristic of rock. In one of the best essays in *Rock and Roll Will Stand,* Langdon Winner describes how the "death" of rock in the early sixties led to its present diversity:

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> Across the nation young singers and instrumentalists turned away from rock to other varieties of music — folk, jazz, classical, Negro church — in order to complete their musical educations. It is no coincidence that when rock experienced its renaissance it was invariably synthesized with elements from these other streams.

With all its ambiguities, its fusion of styles and interplay of words and music, rock contains an implicit warning against flat or one-sided judgments and responses. It both invites and resists analysis ("Let's stick that in there . . . that'll start them puzzling," says John Lennon). The best rock is immediate, but elusive, always moving, not to be pinned down or proved or forced to definite conclusions. The idea of conclusion, of rigid, set limits is often mocked. In "Hey Jude," when the song apparently comes to an end, the conclusion takes over and the Beatles extend it until it is longer than the song itself. The melody is relatively formal, but the ending is free, open, unbounded, building more and more joyously on what had been a very sad song. The ending is a liberation. At the same time, it questions detachment. The repetition, the refusal to end involves the listener in the song as an experience which is overflowing its prescribed limits. More than any other group, the Beatles make the audience aware of the demands being made on their time and concentration. How much room will they allow the song? Will they let it happen or will they attempt to control it, turn it down, or pass it off as mere repetition or perhaps attribute to it far more than it means.

The Beatles often seem to be testing their critics, drawing them out, challenging them. Of all the records they have made, the anti-violence song "Revolution," released in the revolution-minded summer of 1968, most obviously called for attack. John Lennon must have known that the message was unfashionable. At the same time, the Rolling Stones came out with a driving song, "Street Fighting Man," which sounded inflammatory (radio stations banned it). The response was predictable — the Stones were cheered as radical heroes, the Beatles attacked as irrelevant. Greil Marcus' "A Singer and a Rock and Roll Band" (in *Rock and Roll Will Stand*), is probably the only perceptive reaction to both songs, because he listened to both the words and the music. His dissatisfaction with the obvious verbal message of "Revolution" did not distract him from the music.

> There is freedom and movement in the music, even as there is sterility and repression in the lyrics. Music takes risks that politics avoid, and that is why *Revolution* isn't simply a collection of pronouncements and rules. . . . It is a wild shouting song . . . The music makes me happy even though the lyrics depress me . . . George Har-

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> rison and John Lennon are playing unfettered and incredibly loud guitars, mad with the freedom of making music on the spot.

Marcus is a graduate student in political science at Berkeley, and most of the contributors to his collection *Rock and Roll Will Stand* are also at Berkeley. The result is of course more consistent (and more effective, I think) than a wide-ranging hodgepodge like Eisen's anthology, *The Age of Rock,* where most of the writers treat rock as a subject rather than a cause. Marcus' title indicates the spirit the book means to project (thus no abbreviation to "rock" since rock has been used to cover too much and no longer means what they think it should). At best, the Berkeley writers express rock as an experience, as Marcus does in the passage above; at worst, they describe it in the language of a thesis, even though they mean to assert it over the traditional graduate school subjects.

Carl Belz is an assistant professor of art history at Brandeis, and his *Story of Rock* is ambitious, carefully structured, scholarly, humorless and finally less in touch with the subject than *Rock and Roll Will Stand.* Belz makes good observations throughout (particularly on the early days of rock), but he is limited by his insistence on a thesis (that rock is a folk art) and his determination to treat it as a solemn enterprise. The approach is the antithesis of the subject, and the language is formal, consistently mechanical and more concerned with theory than experience ("I want to argue . . .", "My purpose is not to consider . . ."). Sometimes the result is unintentional parody — the art historian's version of rock. Where else would a teenage TV show, *Malibu U.,* be compared with a school of painting?

> The show was crowded with bikini-clad girls who, as they scampered through forests and across beaches, were reminiscent of stale nineteenth-century paintings by French academicians such as Bouguereau, paintings which disguised a restricting aesthetic in the cloak of a supposedly natural vitality.

Later, Belz compares the British influence on American rock and roll with John Singleton Copley's and Benjamin West's move to England to live in "the more civilized atmosphere of the London academy." Rock has a way of provoking the most extreme comparisons, and their effectiveness depends on the way they are delivered. Belz is too solemn and too consciously detached. The Berkeley writers enjoy mixing rock with unlikely subjects, but they do it (with some exceptions) in a spirit of fun and as a way of demonstrating that rock is big enough and significant enough to take in or equal any of the more elevated art forms and subjects. (One of the exceptions is Steve Strauss's "A Ro-

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mance on Either Side of Dada," which carries the idea to boring excess.)

Richard Meltzer (the author of "Aesthetics of Rock" in Eisen's anthology) turns the concept of comparison into a free-associating vaudeville routine, jumbling the most fantastic contraries in a demonstration that his writing can mimic rock by being exactly as he describes it — "wantonly eclectic." If Bob Dylan can put Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot on Desolation Row, Meltzer can put Teilhard de Chardin in the same context with "What's New Pussycat?" and then mate "Too Much Tequila" with Quine and William James. In rock, anything goes. Nothing is too serious for it. Meltzer equates a banal line from an obscure song with Hegel's "end of history," mocking scholarship and scholarly language even as he uses them. Meltzer performs his response to rock and brings into it all he possibly can, much in the way he describes John Lennon grouping together "tragedy, comedy, pornography, melodrama, structured philosophy, mathematics and psychology, history, limerick, babble." He may have had Lennon's "I am the Walrus" in mind, a song that crowds in as much, perhaps more, than it can hold, bringing together words from clashing contexts (like "pornographic priestess" and "elementary penguin") and allusions to the Eiffel Tower and Edgar Allan Poe, with a snatch from King Lear thrown in at the end, which is seemingly open to everything, like the end of "Hey Jude."

While Meltzer offers a mimetic response to recorded rock, Nik Cohn, in *Rock, From the Beginning,* dramatizes his experience almost entirely from the position of a spectator witnessing a performance. What may be a metaphorical show to Meltzer is a real show for Cohn, and the more sensational it is, the better he likes it. He prefers performers to musicians, drama to music. It is impossible to take him seriously as a critic, which may be why I think he succeeds in writing closer to the actual feeling of rock than anyone else. I would never trust his opinion on a record, and he is the last person who should be writing long album reviews for *The New York Times* about music he is incapable of appreciating. He blames the Beatles for ruining rock and roll; he thinks they began to "go soft" back in 1965 with *Rubber Soul.* Dylan, as he puts it, bores him stiff: "a minor talent with a major gift for self-hype." The Stones are his favorite band, but he feels "they've wasted themselves." Otis Redding is dismissed as a ham, "monotonous . . . a bit Tom."

Cohn means to infuriate people. Often, he is very funny. I like his book better than the Roxon encyclopedia, the Belz history and the Eisen anthology, all of which mean to be useful. Cohn does not mean to be useful any more than a rock musician means to be when he begins to play. He is noisy, insistent, repetitive, crude and determined never to let his language get too far above the subject. He does make references, for instance, to Dickens, Dostoyevsky and Fitzgerald, but the allusions

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are apt and purely descriptive. Many people have written about Paul McCartney's charm. Cohn can write, "Paul McCartney played Dick Diver," as if literature, too, need not be stuffy or remote, but part of the act, the same entertainment.

Cohn writes less like a spectator than a victim. His heroes are those who can do the most damage to him. Huge violent caricatures of the performer sweat and stagger across the stage, their actions described with words like "smashed," "slashed," "gouged, entirely annihilated." About James Brown: "That's the way he hurts you and beats you up." Or Ray Charles, a page later: 'He twisted you and hurt you. The first time I saw him he stretched me so tight, I threw up." Cohn admits he was "sixteen at the time and very romantic." He is twenty-two now, and he sounds like a mixture of Mike Hammer and Holden Caulfield: "All the same, I didn't spew for just anyone." This is what Tina Turner does to him:

> . . . the sweat rolls off her in sheets and her lips peel back from her teeth and she's quite murderous . . .
> . . . and suddenly she came thundering down on me like an avalanche, backside first, all that flesh shaking and leaping in my face. And I reared back in self-defense — all the front row did — and then someone fell over and we all immediately collapsed in a heap, struggling and cursing, thrashing about like fish in a bucket.
> . . . So sassy, so smug and evil. She'd used her ass as a bowling ball and she'd scored a strike. Smart woman: her flesh dissolving and her hair all flying and her big man-eater teeth flashing.

It may not be good writing, but Cohn's version of Tina Turner is certainly preferable to Lillian Roxon's, in her *Rock Encyclopedia;* "The easiest way to describe Tina Turner is to say that she doubles in intensity whatever any other singer is capable of . . . ." The easiest way, and the dullest. If he had bothered to mention her at all (he also neglects to mention Phil Spector, the legendary rock producer), Carl Belz might have compared her with a painting.

At this point, rock and formal criticism most obviously clash. Some writers would argue that Tina Turner is not a "serious artist." What, then, about Mick Jagger? The Rolling Stones have been patronized, exploited and misinterpreted by the New Left (among others) ever since they came out with "Street Fighting Man." And they became "serious" to the serious-minded when they produced one of the best rock songs ever written, "Sympathy for the Devil," with Jagger playing Lucifer and making explicit historical and political allusions. Geoffrey Cannon, for one, decided that this was the point where the Stones were "relevant" and the Beatles were not. Mick Jagger understands "the fusion between politics and art." When he shouts out, "Who killed the Kennedys?" Cannon hears "the fully committed voice." But to what is it committed?

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Not to politics, or the "revolution," as Cannon seems to think, but to the performance, to the role of the satanic Mick Jagger. And not a "serious" role but a comic one. ("I hope we're not too Messianic/Or a trifle too satanic," he sings, in "Monkey Man.") Jagger is a great joke on pompous language like "fully committed," and he resists the analysis of a writer like Carl Belz, who is obviously more comfortable writing about the Beatles. He eludes Lillian Roxon as well; she calls him "the prototype for stage sexuality," which is true enough, but her words are above experience; she abstracts the excitement of the performance. Mick Jagger a *prototype*! Just the sort of word he would isolate in a sexual context, mocking each syllable with a bump-and-grind. Once again, it is Cohn who gets down to the experience of Mick Jagger:

> He sang but you couldn't hear him for the screams; you only got some background blur, the beat, and all you knew was his lips. His lips and his moving legs, bound up in sausage-skin pants. And he was outrageous: he spun himself blind, he smashed himself, and he'd turn his back on the audience, jack-knife from the waist so that his ass stuck straight up in the air, and shake himself; he'd vibrate like a motor, and he'd reach the hand mike through his legs at you, he'd push it right in your face. Well, he was obscene, he was excessive. Of course, he was beautiful.

Cohn's descriptive energy, honesty and humor (and the relevance of these qualities to good rock) almost make you forget his failure to comprehend or appreciate the wonder and excitement of rock since 1965 — the point at which he thinks it began to decline. He is so charmingly nasty, so nicely outspoken and yet so deaf. He can see the show, but he can't hear the music. Still, who is to say which element is most powerful in rock today — show or music? Deaf or not, is Cohn any less "qualified" to review rock than someone with better judgment and a style that misses the excitement of the music? Drama critics, book critics, movie critics, however impressive their credentials and "good taste," by the quality of their reviews can hardly be held up as paragons of response. It is less difficult, in fact, to review a book or a movie or a play. A rock album is more direct, and superficially more obvious, but its very directness makes it harder to describe. No wonder rock reviews are often foolish. The quality of a good album changes with every hearing. A week, two weeks, even a month is not time enough to make a fair evaluation. The most direct, immediate songs may wear out within a month while the best songs are often those which sounded like murky, confused failures on the first few hearings. One of the pleasures of rock is the experience of becoming familiar with an album, never really sure of it and happy not to be, happy that the experience is a shade different every time. Rock reviewers are expected to compress

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this experience into the space of a few days. Even so, reviews are necessary, if only to inform us about good new albums by unknown groups.

Usually, people writing about rock write best when they are responding to something they like. Paul Williams (former editor of the rock magazine, *Crawdaddy,* and a contributor to *The Age of Rock*) does not write about the music unless it moves him. He rhapsodizes, sometimes to excess, with a depth of feeling that contrasts with the superficiality of most other responses. His essay in *The Age of Rock* is not his best, but it does say something about what he is trying to do.

> . . . the music has become fully a part of my experience and is as expressive to me as thinking . . . . I wander about inside it, certain that there is enough here to explore for months, if only I can stand back far enough to describe to someone else what I am exploring.

Williams, needless to say, does not write "reviews." He wants to give the reader some of the pleasure he feels in the music. Sometimes he overdoes it and his style gushes. But he is aware, in the passage above, of the problem of response. He has to get "inside" the music to express the effect of it, but he must also be able to get back out, to "stand back far enough" to communicate the experience to someone else. He counts on the existence (in his audience) of what Greil Marcus calls "an effortless metaphorical consciousness" which makes possible the intended response to a suggestive phrase.

Jon Landau, who contributed two good essays to Eisen's anthology, approaches rock more objectively, but without sacrificing spontaneity. His talent is to describe not what the music does to him, but how it works on the record. He has a producer's knowledge of what makes a balanced recording, and he is particularly good at putting together intelligent critical surveys on complicated subjects, as he does in the essays on Bob Dylan and Motown which are reprinted in Eisen. Landau has drawbacks, particularly his failure to appreciate two of the major forces in rock — the Beatles and Eric Clapton, who is one of the best, if not the best, musicians on the rock scene. Landau, like Williams, is very good on the music he likes. Otherwise, the most effective contributions to *The Age of Rock* are the interviews with Frank Zappa, Paul McCartney and Bob Dylan. In all that I have read about rock, the really articulate and instructive responses come from the musicians themselves. The form of the interview is more exciting than the form of the review, since the musicians usually speak freely, rather than sitting down to write a conscious or considered statement, after the fact.

Finally — a rock encyclopedia. Not "a" encyclopedia, but *Lillian Roxon's Rock Encyclopedia.* The possessive gives it away; it's her book, and her chatty style rules over each cheerfully bland, dutifully judicious

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entry. Rock is assembled, ordered and labeled, and lost. The whole concept seems quixotic somehow, since it is in the nature of rock to ridicule the factual and the final. The names of most groups are themselves diabolically absurd, as if invented to resist conventional classification, or to bewilder some future scholar opening an "encyclopedia" to headings like "The Grateful Dead" or "The Who." And only a "rock encyclopedia" could come up with such perverse, almost Nabokovian mistakes. "Lonesome Susie," a song by the Band (so named as a reaction against the name game), is listed as "Lonesome Swine," and the Stones' "Flight 505" and "Going Home" are cut to "Flight" and "Going." Two songs by Procol Harum are listed as released in 1966, before the group existed. These are quibbles, but books which claim to be encyclopedias deserve quibbling with.

Perhaps the worst thing about this "encyclopedia" is Miss Roxon's insistence on perpetuating the foolish and all but meaningless labels ("Raga rock," "Acid rock") imposed on rock by its various publicists. And since the encyclopedia form demands categories, Miss Roxon forces still more labels into it, as if she had to fit rock to every occasion — "summer rock," "soft rock," "teeny rock," "God rock," "future rock," "electronic rock" and, of course, "death rock."

Rock probably does constitute an encyclopedia of the experience of its audience. Perhaps, at this moment a group of happy fanatics is putting together the ultimate rock encyclopedia, nothing so explicit or rigid or superficial as Miss Roxon's, but a manuscript or possibly a tape that is constantly in the process of alteration, amended every day, and drastically amended with each new album by the Beatles or the Stones or Dylan, any one of whom could provide enough for an encyclopedia. "If we could only hear enough, and remember all we hear . . .," Greil Marcus wrote, "the answers would be there on the thousands of rock 'n' roll records that have brought us to the present." Criticism, encyclopedia, anthology, history all exist on the records, or in the minds of the audience, that "effortless metaphorical consciousness" which has put forth such an impressive variety of response. In those terms, these five books, however flawed, are acceptable, if only as reflections of the variety and power of their subject. The best way to find out about rock is still to listen to it, and anyone who wants to know what was happening in rock in 1969 should listen to (for a start) *Abbey Road* by the Beatles; *Let It Bleed* by the Stones; *The Band* by the Band; *Astral Weeks* by Van Morrison; *Tommy* by the Who; *Nashville Skyline* by Bob Dylan; and *Arthur: Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire* by the Kinks.

Stuart Mitchner

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ALL EYE

THE COMPLETE POEMS. By Elizabeth Bishop. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $7.50.

"The famous eye will now disappear behind glasses." This is Elizabeth Bishop, taking up and turning aside, not unappreciatively, a phrase Robert Lowell used to introduce her, last spring, at one of her rare New York readings. Her "famous eye" is valued by many of our best poets who — except for their shared admiration for Miss Bishop — might find little writing they could otherwise all agree to value. It is good to have her *Complete Poems* now, not because anyone has forgtten them, nor because she has stopped writing ('complete to date' one assumes as the meaning of the title), but because having all these poems in hand at once is an energetic reminder of just what it is poets have learned, and still have to learn, from her. The surprise of reading *Questions of Travel* (1965) after the volumes published ten and twenty years earlier, *North & South* and *A Cold Spring,* would suggest, if one could be only abstract about it, a parable about important changes in American poetry. But Miss Bishop provides more than an example; the poems have been alive and exciting, one by one, as they appeared. I think of this present volume not so much as an indication of what has happened in American verse — its achieved grasp of conversational and colloquial idiom — but as something of a provocation for poets trying to find new ways of registering character in poetry.

In an earlier issue, Richard Poirier speaks of the extreme situation of modern fiction whose characters become "passive receptors of phenomena from outside; they become all ears, listening to sounds of voices, noises from the street, literary parodies and emulations, music." It seems to me that American poetry, by contrast, has become increasingly a place for the expression and definition of character (hence the importance of a collection like Lowell's *Life Studies*); it recalls the resources of personality, of the active rather than the passive speaking voice of fiction, and, certainly in Miss Bishop's case, is all eye rather than the "all ears" of the fictional heroes Poirier describes.

Miss Bishop's own wry offhand remark about the "famous eye" reminds us that she has always prodded readers to think of its limits, its strainings, its imperfections (a very different thing from the eccentric and delicate perfection of Marianne Moore's descriptions). Miss Bishop asks questions and is guarded about her powers. "The Monument," a poem of painstaking description, speculation and adjustments of perspec-

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tive, begins, "Now can you see the monument?" and ends, "Watch it closely." In "Cirque d'Hiver" with its beautiful observation of a mechanical toy, circus horse with pink dancer suspended above it, she turns at last toward the performing animal, "Facing each other rather desperately/ —his eye is like a star—/ we stare and say, 'Well, we have come this far.'" This is where character comes in. Hers is an odd combination of visual accuracy and individual accent — the latter perhaps unobtrusive, seemingly transparent, but there, like a lens. *North & South* appeared at almost the same time as Wallace Stevens was making his large injunction to "see it with the hottest fire of sight./ Burn everything not part of it to ash," and with it the warning that "It is the human that is the alien,/ The human that has no cousin in the moon." The human is exactly what cannot be excluded when Miss Bishop observes.

There are, of course, temptations, spellbound moments, when experience seems to offer something else, "self-made from elements least visible." This is "The Imaginary Iceberg" which "saves itself perpetually and adorns/ only itself," and of which she writes: "We'd rather have the iceberg than the ship,/ although it meant the end of travel." This is "a scene a sailor'd give his eyes for./ The ship's ignored." Again, in the wonderful "Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance," we are tantalized by the promise of vision beyond the "'and' and 'and'" of accumulated travel:

> *Everything only connected by "and" and "and."*
> *Open the book. (The gilt rubs off the edges*
> *of the pages and pollinates the fingertips.)*
> *Open the heavy book. Why couldn't we have seen*
> *this old Nativity while we were at it?*
> *—the dark ajar, the rocks breaking with light,*
> *an undisturbed, unbreathing flame,*
> *colorless, sparkless, freely fed on straw,*
> *and, lulled within, a family with pets,*
> *—and looked and looked our infant sight away.*

These phrases — "a scene a sailor'd give his eyes for"; "looked and looked our infant sight away" — carry a mysterious yearning which they also guard against. They are at once colloquial and sophisticated, making us think, as if for the first time, of the terrifying folk truth behind the apparent satisfactions of a sight we'd "give our eyes for." If we are to see the old Nativity in "Over 2,000 Illustrations," what will it mean to "look and look our infant sight away?" Where or when is *away*? Is it a measureless absorption in the scene, an invitation to keep

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exercising our wondering *infant sight*? Or a loss of powers (to waste away)? Or a welcome relinquishment of burdens (to lose only *infant* sight — it keeps its Latin meaning of "speechless" — and become truly articulate)? Commanding the mysteries of idiomatic speech, Miss Bishop hints at these meanings and others without ever pressing for symbols or emblems. She finds her portents in everyday speech and in those very "questions of travel" which, ideally, we'd give up. "We'd rather have the iceberg than the ship,/ Although it meant the end of travel." There are in her poems no final visions — only the saving, continuing, precise pursuits of the travelling eye.

This, I think, is the importance of her third published volume, *Questions of Travel*, different in tone from the earlier books, less puzzled, more serene, filled with the clear details of life lived in a particular place — Brazil. The title poem of that third volume poses the "questions of travel": "There are too many waterfalls here. . . . Think of the long trip home./ Should we have stayed at home and thought of here?" It comes as close to answering as saying that it would have been a pity to miss certain things: "trees . . . really exaggerated in their beauty," "the sad, two-noted, wooden tune/ of disparate wooden clogs," a "fat brown bird/ who sings above the broken gasoline pump/ in a bamboo church of Jesuit baroque:"

> *— And never to have had to listen to rain*
> *so much like politicians' speeches:*
> *two hours of unrelenting oratory*
> *and then a sudden golden silence*
> *in which the traveller takes a notebook, writes:*
>
> *"Is it lack of imagination that makes us come*
> *to imagined places, not just stay at home?*
> *Or could Pascal have been not entirely right*
> *about just sitting quietly in one's room?*
>
> *Continent, city, country, society:*
> *the choice is never wide, and never free.*
> *And here, or there . . . No. Should we have stayed at home,*
> *wherever that may be?"*

These questions — about travel, but made possible by travel — begin to satisfy an imagining mind. Answers come in a resourceful mastery of detail (no fear of repetition: "wooden tune . . . wooden clogs") or in an image so vivid as to clear the poem's doubts as magically as the golden silence which follows the "rain" of political oratory. Her metaphor, dismissing *meaningless* speech, confirms the traveler in his vocation, in the selective precision of memory. Originally, the volume

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Questions of Travel included a magnificent story, "In the Village," omitted from *Complete Poems* and reserved for a future collection of prose. The tale reaches back to a Nova Scotia childhood, a young girl glimpsing her mother, just back from a sanitarium; memories of a mother's scream echo through scenes which are also rich, strong recollections of village life and of a child's country comforts. "In the Village" is intimately related to the travel poems among which it was set: the darker side of their serene need to reclaim "the elements speaking: earth, air, fire, water." Or, as the title poem puts it: "What childishness is it that while there's a breath of life/ in our bodies, we are determined to rush/ to see the sun the other way around?"

It should be clear that when Miss Bishop writes about nature, about objects, about experiences, it is with a very strong sense of their intractability and challenge. Nature cannot easily be combed for moral emblems. Her poems, every bit as conservative in form as other poems of the forties and fifties, are much stranger than what in those decades we took to be poetry. What the sixties have left behind is a notion, a false reading perhaps encouraged by Eliot's criticism, of the perfect "metaphysical" poem, one in which an observed object or deed can be taken securely as an "objective correlative" for inner experience. In such poems the camera is held still, the lines and vision confident and well-defined. Stare, learn, tell: the connections are swift. It is exactly that fixity which, in their very different ways, poets like Lowell, Berryman, Merrill and Adrienne Rich have helped undermine, with the effect of making poetry less Parnassian, more exciting, more an accounting for life, a continuing effort. Going back to Miss Bishop's poems, one finds it all there without any fuss: the most precise psychological connections made between the needs of exact observation and the frail nightmares of the observer, between the strangeness of what is seen and the strangeness of the person seeing it. Not that she exposes her readers, as Lowell's *Notebook* does, to the nightmare formation of thought, the minute-by-minute turns of character. Rather than ending in fantasy or nightmare, Miss Bishop often begins with them, placing many of her poems at the edge of sleeping and waking, still drawing upon the syntax of dreams. Her poems use dreams as a way to clarity.

Two visions of the modern city come to mind. The wakening lover in "Love Lies Sleeping" asks "earliest morning" to "draw us into daylight in our beds." An immense city is "carefully revealed":

> *reaching so languidly up into*
> *a weak white sky, it seems to waver there.*
> *(Where it has slowly grown*
> *in skies of water-glass*

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from fused beads of iron and copper crystals,
the little chemical "garden" in a jar
trembles and stands again,
pale blue, blue-green, and brick.)

It is all re-created in front of our eyes: early morning blasting, the water-wagon's "snowy fan across/ peelings and newspapers," clothes-lines, "alarms for the expected." And then a stroke as brilliant as the chemical "garden" in the lines above:

queer cupids of all persons getting up,
whose evening meal they will prepare all day,
you will dine well
on his heart, on his, and his,

so send them about your business affectionately,
dragging in the streets their unique loves.
Scourge them with roses only,
be light as helium,

for always to one, or several, morning comes,
whose head has fallen over the edge of his bed,
whose face is turned
so that the image of

the city grows down into his open eyes
inverted and distorted. No. I mean
distorted and revealed,
if he sees it at all.

The cautious play of *inverted*, *distorted*, *revealed* tells a great deal about Miss Bishop's triumphs. *If* something has been seen, it has been seen with a rooted, piercing, transforming vision. Her characters are placed under enchantments where they must see with the freshest eye, enchantments twinned with love, insomnia, bad dreams, special distinguishing flaws which allow them to see anew. Sometimes even a misprint will free them for vision: a newspaper typo of *man-moth* for *mammoth*. "The Man-Moth," a surfaced, aspiring aspect of ourselves, is described in a matter-of-fact way, as if he were a seperate figure in nature. Nervous, curious, unlike "man" who has no illusions and does not see the moon, he scales buildings to "push his small head through that round clean opening/ and be forced through, as from a tube, in black scrolls on the light." He inhabits, normally, the nightmare world of the subways. Fully imagined, painstakingly described, he is suddenly a challenge to the reader: "If you catch him . . . if you're not paying attention . . . if you watch . . ." Our underground man with his illusions is made through the detailed pursuit of the poem to yield up,

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for the intense pursuer — *if* he watches, *if* he pays attention — "one tear, his only possession" which "like the bee's sting" slips from his lids. "If you watch, he'll hand it over,/ cool as from underground springs and pure enough to drink." Miss Bishop's immense sympathy for idiosyncrasy always depends upon seeing it sharply, flaw and vision twinned.

The poems in *Questions of Travel,* and some of the new poems first printed in *Complete Poems* are so clear they seem spoken by someone fresh from dreams, just awake. Many of them describe a country where the truth is almost as strange as dreams and to which the forms of legend and ballad ("The Riverman"; "The Burglar of Babylon") seem entirely appropriate. Humble figures are described in an understated, humorous fashion, and yet take on a mythical air, like the tenant Manuelzinho or the seamstress who grows to be like one of the Fates, Clotho nourished in their midst. But nothing is overdone or beyond the daily exercise of composing oneself. Here, I think, is the point at which Miss Bishop's poems are most provocative. Finally their technique is the opposite of the poetic journal, Lowell's latest urgent attempts at registering character in verse. Registering, transmitting, is the *Notebook*'s strongest effect, these poems which end in blazing nightmares, clear vision frayed by underground warnings. Miss Bishop's instinct — from which so much of the modern poetic interest in character derives — is something else: without ever abandoning the feelings of the moment, continually aware, constantly using verse to master the flood of the particular, she writes poetry to compose rather than expose the self. Doing that, her *Compete Poems* makes us alive again to what poetic *composition* is — both something private and something shared.

David Kalstone

REVOLUTION MISCARRIED

OBSOLETE COMMUNISM: THE LEFT WING ALTERNATIVE. By Daniel Cohn-Bendit. McGraw-Hill. $5.95.

The revolutionary events of May 1968 ended the fictitious glory of DeGaulle's France and forced the Communist Party in what must have been a terrifying moment to face the prospect of seizing power. One important effect of the antiinstitutional, antibureaucratic student movement which helped to precipitate these events has become obvious; its power to evoke a profoundly conservative response from any group or institution defined by its claims upon present stability. Here too, lies the basis for its bitter dispute with the established Left. In

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Obsolete Communism, one of the most prominent student leaders, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, with his brother Gabriel, has written a patchwork, but compelling account of the turmoil in France. In the course of his book he develops a theory to explain why the student movement clashed with university and government bureaucracies, rebounded into the factories and then reemerged as part of what almost became a working-class revolution. As such, his book belongs to a special and important genre of historical writing designed to capture the history of an event and make its interpretation the possession of the Left, like Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* or C. Wright Mills's *Listen Yankee!* In spite of some hasty writing and unfortunate translation, Cohn-Bendit has created a clear and intriguing call to fulfill the very old goal of revolution in an advanced industrial nation.

The author suggests that the power of the French student movement and the unorganized general strike which paralyzed France lay in the spontaneous actions of students and workers. The unexpected alliance of these two groups similarly polarized conservative forces and compelled French bureaucrats and Communist Party officials to huddle together in the face of threats to their power. As an interpretation of the events of May, this makes a good deal of sense. More questionable, however, is the assumption that this temporary and unique polarization between spontaneity and bureaucracy can become a permanent revolutionary situation. Can spontaneity force a reconstruction of society which is not defeated by the inertia that clogs modern industrial society and, apparently, most radical sects? But even if incomplete, the theory of spontaneity is immensely suggestive as a way of understanding a strike and an incomplete revolution whose slogan was "It's for yourselves that you make the revolution."

Cohn-Bendit places the French events in the context of the world-wide student movement; Berkeley first, then Berlin and then Paris. Certainly, this is misleading. The Berkeley Free Speech Movement as well as other American university-based movements have not had the open-ended historical possibilities which France realized. Pent-up working-class bitterness in America has flooded over into racism, into slogans attacking federal control of the economy, surreptitious manipulations from Wall Street or Madison Avenue or Moscow, and excessive taxation. American workers have not tried in any serious way, as the French workers tried, to grasp control of their own lives. So far they have been fed political solutions which offer no solution. Nor has there been much political contact between American university students and young members of the working class, although both groups share a common music-movie-drug-oriented culture. If anything, the recent uprising on Amer-

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ican campuses has increased tensions between students and workers. Many workers, encouraged by government officials, have reacted against student protesters, accusing them, in effect, of abuse of class and educational privilege. Although the charge of student elitism is apt, it appears in the name of hollow slogans. Thus, any radical student-worker alliance must, it seems, surmount the obstacles of class hostility and ideological bewilderment.

In another sense, Cohn-Bendit is right to place Paris at the center of a worldwide student movement. One of the causes for the student uprising lies squarely with the changes in the university structure which have occurred in France since World War II. The author never precisely defines the transformation of the university, but it is clear from his interpretation of the crisis and from the demands of student radicals, that French institutions of higher learning have changed enormously — almost visibly — in the past decade, often at the instigation of those who would emulate American successes in training technician-bureaucrats. Such changes have occurred within an already bureaucratized state. Thus, in France, the alterations have seemed swift and obvious. In America, change has seemed endless, compartmentalized, disguised as social science or performed behind the drapery of reform slogans. Moreover, in some cases, as Cohn-Bendit points out, reform in France is explicitly identified with American theories and styles of sociology and psychology, with theories of industrial and consumer manipulation. French students who were already angrily anti-American struck out at these trends and resisted the transformation of the universities into what they thought were American prototypes.

But more profoundly, revolutionary students saw issues in terms of two tightly related social patterns in France: bureaucracy and social manipulation — to which they counterposed spontaneous political action. They took this message into the factories where it became the basis for their short alliance with the working class. Spontaneity in the student actions and the general strike is for Cohn-Bendit the very core of a new program of social transformation. When workers organized their own political organizations in the factory, listened to students, passed revolutionary slogans and ignored their trade union (Communist) leaders, they were acting spontaneously. When they acted as if managers were expendable, they were spontaneous. But when they fell under the leadership of the Communist Party, they once more became the bottom of the bureaucratic heap. To Cohn-Bendit, spontaneity is revolutionary action smashing the bureaucratic props of capitalism. Anything which opposes its force, which superimposes limitations, is acting to preserve capitalism.

The proof of the author's theory lies, he believes, in the history of

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the events of May. His narrative of those events is a compelling and often incredible tale of the efforts of the state and the Communist Party, each for its own purposes, to suppress the general strike. Inescapably, he writes, the Communists acted as arms of the state, in an effort to anchor their power and favor in French society. But the fault is not with a few stodgy bureaucrats who acted to preserve their own jobs. It lies much more deeply, and distantly (since there is no discussion of the history of French Communism), in the tenacious ideology of the Bolshevik Revolution. Here he finds the origins of the highly centralized, immobile French Communist Party.

Cohn-Bendit's natural intellectual opponent in his discussion of Bolshevism is Trotsky. As he has for others, Trotsky also serves Cohn-Bendit as a source of inspiration. Cohn-Bendit's theory of spontaneity arises almost inevitably out of Trotsky's own *History of the Russian Revolution,* from that imperfect seam by which the historian Trotsky tried to join the spontaneous, mass elements of revolution to the planned actions of the Bolsheviks. Thus it is no surprise that Cohn-Bendit's interpretation of the Russian Revolution sounds vaguely like Dwight Macdonald's efforts in the 1930's to describe a "bureaucratic collectivism." Nor is it difficult to see why his measure of the Russian Revolution — as it was for Macdonald — becomes the Krondstadt Rebellion in 1921. Like Macdonald and many other radicals who were deeply impressed by Trotsky's understanding of Stalinism, but appalled by his defense of Bolshevism, and who found in his ambiguity about the Revolution a fatal defense of bureaucracy, Cohn-Bendit rests his theory of spontaneity somewhere close to anarchism. It is testimony to the longevity of that imperfect socialist revolution that parties, like political museums, preserve the relics of Bolshevik programs. And ironically, revolutionaries must still fight their way out of the endless corridors of its influence before they can understand the present.

Strangely, Cohn-Bendit's weakest point resembles the very failure he condemns in Trotsky. He argues for the necessity of an alliance between workers and students, for a spontaneous revolution, but nowhere does he discuss the mechanics of this alliance. It is not entirely clear from his work that students in the long run can act in a fundamentally different fashion from a traditional revolutionary party. Such class or group alliances as he proposes deepen the risk that the force which creates a revolutionary cohesion will be transformed into a force for bureaucratic stability. In the last analysis, the question of spontaneity seems to be a judgment imposed by the students themselves on the ideological content of workers' organizations. The birth of a revolution still remains the criterion — as it did for Trotsky. On this key issue,

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Cohn-Bendit is unclear and for the most part plays the historian and not the theorist. The short and unsatisfying statement of what is to be done reflects this failure to move beyond historical analysis.

Apart from theories or even the narrative of events, there is a tone which sets aside the problems of history, and which binds Cohn-Bendit to the contemporary youth movement. Here is a different sort of proof of the importance of the university uprisings and growing cohesion they promote between political styles and cultural patterns. By way of an introductory apology, the author shoves a fistful of invective at publishing houses and *raconteurs* of revolutionary events. Clearly, he identifies the publishing industry with the corporate system. Yet he is intrigued with the mass media and its revolutionary possibilities. At one point, he proposes that the very height of revolutionary activity would be to occupy government buildings, and particularly, to take over communications facilities. This implied distinction which radicals make in their judgment of radio, television, the film and more traditional forms of linear communication is one of the cultural marks of today's radicalism. And spontaneity, as a revolutionary concept, is as much a style linked to international culture as it is a pattern of political behavior. If nothing else this is the true measure of our distance from 1917, and the relevance of Berkeley.

James Gilbert

EX MACHINA

LITERATURE AND TECHNOLOGY: THE ALIEN VISION. Wylie Sypher. Random House. $6.95.

Another book on the two cultures and Sypher's conclusion is that they are "alien." Why shouldn't they be? Literature and technology would seem to have as much in common as Alice and the Queen of Hearts. Not so, Professor Sypher propounds, and his book is devoted to studying the interrelations. More commonly, books about the two cultures deal with literature and science, but Sypher is not interested in that worn subject. He makes it very clear at the outset that technology is *not* science. And there lies the rub!

Technology is TV, telephones, cars, computers, refrigerators; science is equations, theorems, corollaries, axioms. Hardly similar. Technology is the actual machine, building, complex of wires; science is theoretical hypotheses, algebraic and geometric theorems, biochemical syntheses. Technology requires science but her ends are altogether different: as Sypher labels them, "impersonal, predictable, thrifty." Science is hardly

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any of these. There is great "personality" in Newton's optical equations or Einstein's relativity theorems: neither were engendered with an eye to "predictability" and their creators could have cared less about their theory's "thriftiness" (can one imagine Newton's or Einstein's comments on the thriftiness or utility of twentieth-century applied science!) Again, all dissimilarities. Technology is everything that science is not, although she is indeed her child. Technology exists for the masses, science for the few. And while it is impossible in this day and age to get through a week's living without technology, one can do very nicely without science.

Obviously, there are dozens of other relations and the whole subject is entrancing. What, for example, would the argument have looked like if Sypher stressed the "similarities"? But Sypher's point is the reverse: that the two could not be more different, and it is from that point that he makes his greater point about the relations of technology and art. What damage has resulted in confusing them — in not recognizing that science is anything but impersonal, predictable and geared toward thriftiness. Technology permits civilization "to program" the whole universe on a computer; science is conversely the poetic musings in mathematical symbols of an artist. And if we have read the record of mankind, we know there are more affinities between the Shakespeares and the Galileos than between the Alexander Graham Bells and Isaac Newtons. When did the rift begin? How did mother science and child technology become so divisive as they appear in the last hundred years? What factors were involved? What is the history of this rift?

Curiously and to his disadvantage Sypher doesn't really answer the questions he raises. He knows there was a rift (beginning roughly in the eighteenth century) and commences after the cleavage, which is fair enough — until scrutinized closely. And there the problem begins, for Sypher does not recognize the overlapping, residual lingering qualities that remained in the nineteenth century. Pure and applied science — he maintains — simply diverged, and their teleologies changed as well. Artists, always sensitive to transformations in culture, were profoundly affected by the rift, and, wittingly or not, they subtly absorbed the methodology of the new technology. Impersonality, predictability, thriftiness — in general, what Sypher calls "distancing." Such "distance" reaped heavy tolls and as a consequence artists became alienated from their former status as artists, became more akin to technologists. Not surprisingly, their art took on impersonal, predictable, artificial and "programmable" aspects of technology, and it was not until this century — so goes the theory — that artists themselves revolted against such metallic technological art, and caused a regression to a more paleolithic age of greater artist-audience-cosmos participation.

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That, in brief, is Sypher's thesis. And given the fact that Sypher is professionally an art historian, we should not be surprised to discover him emphasizing that aspect. Technology, that is, everything impersonal, predictable and thrifty, gets short shrift in this book, but science gets even less. The course of British science (I use the term in Sypher's sense) from 1800 to 1900 underwent monumental changes in basic assumptions and methodology: an inchoate empiricism, so long adhered to in the Enlightenment, gave way to more sophisticated forms of what constituted indisputable "proof." To none of these majestic changes does Sypher address himself: he assumes, reductionistically (at least), that both technology and science were static and neglects the sociology of scientific change as a plausible dimension of his subject: the influence of effects of technology on the sensibility of artists.

But I do not wish to dispraise the book unduly. The argument is deft, the writing often brilliant and there is no doubt that technology radically affected certain artists, as Blake noted in *Jerusalem* in the celebrated passage castigating Locke and Newton. The only question — and it is the ultimate one — is whether it "damaged" him. Sypher, a romantic and surreptitiously Blakean, believes it did ("In saying all this I am assuming that engineering is hostile to art"), and he directs all his energies to a demonstration of the precise nature — its guises, contours and textures — of this damage.

Damage, for Sypher, took the form of exclusion: exclusion from the cosmos, society, himself and even his own (the nineteenth-century artist's) interior imaginative world. While earlier artists (writers, painters) could imitate ("mimesis") and participate ("methexis"), the nineteenth–century artist instead manufactured a carbon copy of the methodology of technology and called it his "aesthetic": one that was every whit as impartial, detached, predictable, accurate and thrifty as the scientist's.

In practice, not theory, this means that the poetry of Browning, Valèry, Mallarmé, etc., the novels of Zola and George Eliot, the prose divagations of Pater and the "Decadents," the impressionistic paintings of Cézanne and Degas display aspects of impersonality. And indeed they do. A gulf, indeed a vast ocean, exists between the artist-maker and his materials (the universe, more recently the *bricolage* or things-done-with–the-hands of contemporary French structuralist philosophers; see Janine Gardel, *Le Bricolage,* Paris, 1966). Ruskin-the-aesthete resisted the formulas of the new technology; and he is, consequently, the hero of this book and Comte-the-positivist, the technologist par excellence, its villain. Romantic poets like Blake, Wordsworth and Keats were unaffected by applied science, and their writings are consequently more human and

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less artificially stylized than those of the symbolists and decadents. In brief, "style became a technological artifice."

So long as Sypher writes about painting and literature, his pages instruct and delight (he has that rare gift of some critics to illuminate entire works by single sentences). But he is less persuasive in the interaction of the elements of his subject. His work may be viewed as the trigonometry of technology, pure science and art; Sypher views his task as the discovery of the dynamics of interaction in the center. Given the fact that the nexus is elusive, technology and science are treated less than meritoriously in this book.

Literature and Technology, finally, raises the question of the future of egoism, particularly in artists but also in technologists and scientists. It questions deeply and historically the growth of romantic egoism (the means to the transcendental moment) and relates that egoism to the art it produced. Keats was genuinely skeptical of the egoism of a poet with so plentiful and powerful an imagination as Wordworth's ("the Wordworthian or egotistical sublime" as Keats called him); but Keats as a philosopher of literature and criticism was provincial and conservative and constantly looking to the past, to Miltonic tradition. Sypher — we would hope — would be much better than Keats on the future of egoism. To my mind, where he errs is in failing to imagine the Protean transformations of which the animal ego is capable. Sypher, whose own sensibility is nearest to that of Blake and Ruskin combined — romantic and decadent at the same time — cannot really conceive of the rewards of technology to art. He professes to be able to, but after all he does not. And here his vision is limited. For if one looks, Icaruslike, at the future of civilization, it is perfectly possible that the artist will survive — nay, will do very well — in the computer ages of the world and that his ego will not evanesce, that he will discover mechanisms by which to maintain his individuality within this necessary marriage to technology. In fact, it is more likely that he will be wedded to, rather than divorced from technology; and that art and technology will gradually evolve into a hermaphroditic culture, uniting their contrary natures. Even in Blake's *Jerusalem,* there is that ultimate dream of Locke, Newton and the inspired bard conversing, hands clasped, mouths touching. Would Sypher consider this a pipe dream?

G. S. Rousseau

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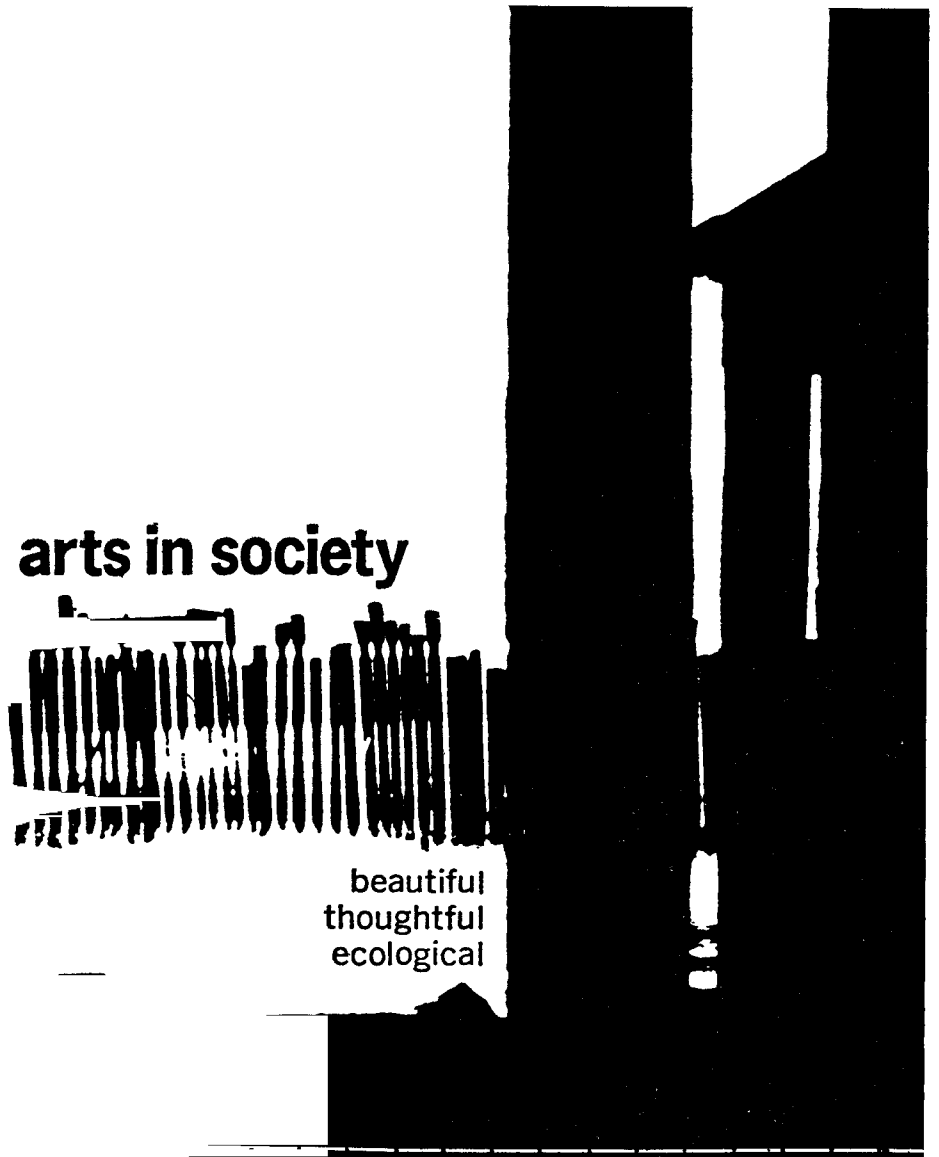

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(*The Bulletin* of the National Institute of Mental Health, Lexington, Kentucky.) Contributed by Richard B. T. Cowan, Lexington, Kentucky.

MUSHROOM CULT SAID SOURCE OF JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

LONDON (AP).—A British philologist has come up with the theory that the Jewish and Christian religions were founded by a drug-taking mystery cult in the Middle East that worshipped the "sacred mushroom." John Marco Allegro, Lecturer on the Old Testament at Manchester University, contends . . . that many of the Bible stories are "mushroom myths" common throughout the Middle East and dating back to 3,500 B.C. The life of Jesus, the crucifixion and the resurrection are all part of the myth, he says, with Jesus representing the mushroom.

Allegro, who trained to be a Methodist minister but is now an agnostic, says that the Bible was written in a code form so that mushroom worshippers could pass on their spells and beliefs in a way to escape persecution by the authorities.

(*Jerusalem Post,* May 19, 1970.) Contributed by Barbara Hochman, Jerusalem, Israel.

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Vice President Spiro T. Agnew—"The vice president is incredible. I feel I should write him a letter. It's amazing what he has done to the media . . . helping it to reform itself. I'm a close watcher of newspapers and TV. I think they've taken a second look. You can't underestimate the power of fear."

(From an interview with Tricia Nixon in *The San Francisco Chronicle,* February 20, 1970.) Contributed by John Benson, Berkeley, California.

ARMY CHIEF PREDICTS NEW BATTLE SYSTEM

ATLANTA, GA. (AP).—U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. William C. Westmoreland says this country's ground forces are on the verge of a new concept that will bring "automated" battlefields complete with maximum utilization of firepower and mobility.

"The Army of the 70s will fight with an integrated battlefield control system that exploits the advanced technology of firepower, communications, sensors and automatic data processing," he predicted here. "We will be able to destroy anything we locate. . . ."

(San Diego *Evening Tribune,* March 4, 1970.) Contributed by James C. Frampton, Chula Vista, California.

FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL—"Courteous Intimidation: the Drive for Life."

(From a stamped motto on an envelope sent by Florida Commissioner of Education.) Contributed by Thomas McGonigle, Hollins College, Virginia.

ON NIXON'S PANEL TO STUDY CAMPUS UNREST

David Ginsburg, a Washington lawyer who was executive director of President Johnson's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, said it was possible that Mr. Nixon would be faced with a report offering recommendations stronger than those the President would find politically acceptable.

(*The New York Times,* June 14, 1970.) Contributed by D. B. Justice, Ridgewood, N. J.

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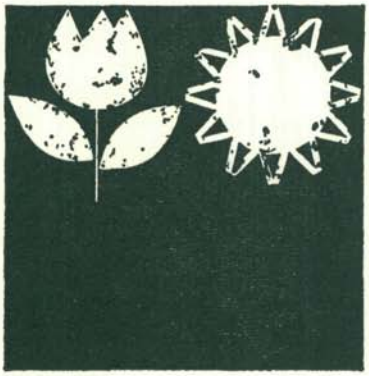

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